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A GENTLEMAN OF THE SOUTH

BY

WILLIAM GARROTT BROWN

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A gentleman of the South

A Gentleman of the South

The MM Co.

"I think it is I who have gained the most," he said gravely.

See page 120.

A Gentleman of the South

A MEMORY OF THE BLACK BELT
FROM THE MANUSCRIPT MEMOIRS
OF THE LATE COLONEL
STANTON ELMORE

EDITED WITHOUT CHANGE
By William Garrott Brown

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To "Our Lady of Delight"

Who questions life's denials, let him dare
  Life's gifts to question, nor, until he prove
'Twas nobly answered, take his answered prayer.
  Life's hireling he that dares not question love.

And I who, alien lands and hearts among,
  Too well have learned that hungrier still goes he
Whom careless mercy feeds, — I, far outflung
  From trustful boyhood's sweet security, —

Shall I, boy-hearted still, go harking back
  Unto thy shrine, — thy glade, thy trees, thy stream, —
Coursing the sad years on the long, white track
  Of that pure light, light of my boyhood's dream,

Whose source thy radiance was? Forbear to try
  If 'twas but half-light, lit by half-love? Feign,
Encompassed by a silence I defy,
  To hear thy soft, remembered speech again?

What! Man's heart lean on boy's heart to the last?
  Confess, I cannot bear my cross alone?
I, who have willed cloakless to brave the blast,
  Creep back to warm me at a cold hearthstone?

Yes, to thy gentle rule once more I bow.
A little while, let man's heart boy's heart be.
For other boy-love death denied thee: thou
An unspent motherhood still gavest me.

And I will half-believe, a little while,
Love, mercy, friendship, never have been less
Than thine, — believe in friendship free from guile,
True love, and mercy with no wantonness.

And it shall be once more as oft, when thou,
At eve of some too tropic day, hast stood
White-garmented and tranquil, and thy brow
Still garland-crowned with thy young womanhood,

And I who, all the fiery, irksome day,
Torn with boy-love, boy-pride, thy love had fled,
At last to love have yielded, — thou wouldst lay
Forgivingly thy hand upon my head,

And forth unto thy hill we two would pace,
And gaze to where the sunset's burnished gold
Still framed for thee love's hope, for me, thy face
Till night, swift-rising, wrapped us fold on fold

April 24.

PREFATORY NOTE

The following narrative was found among the papers of the late Colonel Stanton Elmore soon after his death, which occurred in London near the end of the last century. Colonel Elmore left this country immediately after the downfall of the Southern Confederacy, and did not return until the close of the Franco-Prussian war, in which he had served on the staff of a French officer of high rank. His personal memoirs cover his services in America, in Egypt, and on the continent of Europe, beginning with the first Manassas and ending with Sedan, where his varied military career came also to an end.

The manuscript now given to the public has, apparently, no connection with the body of the memoirs. It relates, as will be seen, to a period preceding his enrolment in the Confederate army, and to events in which he was, at the time, too

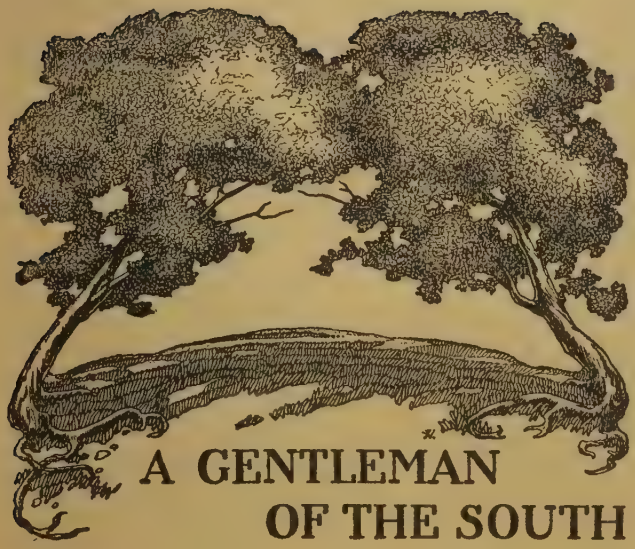
young to have any part. But the general appearance of the manuscript itself, and several expressions in the narrative, indicate that it was written during the latter years of his life, which were spent partly in England and partly in the great Eastern cities of the United States.

ILLUSTRATIONS

"I think it is I who have gained the most," he said gravely (*p.* 120) . . . *Frontispiece*

"I think you do well to cherish it," said the chairman . . . . . *page* 137

CHAPTER I



A GENTLEMAN OF THE SOUTH

CHAPTER I

IT is now more than fifty years since I looked on Henry Selden's face; and in the early spring of '65, just before our lines were broken at Petersburg, I heard that The Cedars was burned. Selden and The Cedars belong to the other half of my life, cut in two, as it was, by the great war; to a world so completely vanished that I sometimes feel as if I never lived in it

save in dreams. It was a world so different from the present, and governed by such different laws, that I am not at all confident of getting any reader's credence for the story I wish to tell. Many will doubtless think it impossible that men should within this century have lived such lives, obeyed such codes, set themselves such standards. Yet the story is fixed in my memory more firmly than events of later date and far greater moment. Selden's gentle presence, the look he wore when he stood silent, his head turned sidewise, is oftener in my mind than many a martial figure with whose name and victories the whole world is long since familiar. I can close my eyes and see The Cedars as plainly as I can see the slope we charged over at the second Manassas, or the fire-crowned Gettysburg hills.

A good time to see The Cedars would have been that Christmas eve, just after the Mexican War, in which old Governor Selden had lost his life, when it waited for young Fitzhugh

Selden, his second son, coming home on his first furlough since the war began, and for little Beverley, the only daughter of the house, coming home from her first absence in Virginia. In the early darkness, the white pillars of the mansion stood out with a fine stateliness against the gloom of the trees which gave the place its name, and far down the avenue stretched the welcoming lights from the great hall, reaching out, as it were, for "the children." That was what everybody at The Cedars still called them, although Fitzhugh was twenty-six, and brevetted captain besides, and Beverley would be eighteen before the Christmas morning dawned.

They were coming together, for Fitzhugh had been sent to Washington with the colors when the city of Mexico fell, and he was bringing his sister home from a Virginian boarding school. Moreover, they were bringing with them a guest. It was a guest whom nobody had ever thought to see at The Cedars; a guest whose coming weighed heavily on old Lewis, as he stood there in the hall listening

for the sound of the carriage wheels. He kept shaking his head forebodingly, and glancing now and then at two portraits on the wall. One of these showed him the face of his old mistress, who had died in giving birth to Beverley just eighteen years before. The other was of the beautiful young girl who, until that same night, had been betrothed to Henry Selden, the governor's eldest son. She also had died untimely only a little while after the portrait was made; and the story was, that she had died of a broken heart. Once or twice, the old man voiced his perplexity; for, like all his race, he was given to thinking aloud. "I dunno *whut* Marse Hinry gwine do," he muttered; and then, with a rising sense of his helplessness in face of the emergency, "I dunno whut he *is* gwine do."

He himself had done his best, for the whole house, notwithstanding it had been under the shadow of mourning ever since its master fell at Monterey, had an air of hospitality and Christmas from the wood cellar, stored as for arctic rigors, to the "dark room" at the top,

where lurked surprises for every pickaninny on the plantation when they should all assemble the next morning to catch their masters and mistresses "Chrismus gif'." Tena also came downstairs feeling that she had done her best, and she showed her sense of duty done by the tone in which she answered Lewis's somewhat petulant inquiry, whether the fire were burning in Fitzhugh's room.

"Co'se hit's burnin'," she said. "Dey's all been burnin' ever sence sundown. Ain't it mos' time fer de chilluns to come?"

Lewis's "uh-huh" was not the gleeful assent it ought to have been, and Tena saw that there was something on his mind. But she also knew better than to ask him what it was. Instead, she mildly inquired whether Tom or Willis had driven the carriage to meet "the children."

"Willis gone wid Marse Hinry to meet Marse Gov'nor Burwell," he grunted.

But Tena went on, apparently quite unmindful of his mood.

"Huccome you say Marse *Gov'nor* Burwell?

Ain't you hyeahed Marse Hinry tell Miss Joanna 'bout de Legislachuh done neglected Marse John to be de sinator? He's Marse *Sinator* Burwell now."

Lewis was disdainful.

"He's de gov'nor *en'* de sinator."

"Go' way!" said Tena.

"He is, I tells you," said Lewis, the slight upon his knowledge of politics arousing him into some warmth of contentiousness. "Don't you know dey hes to be de gov'nor 'fo' dey *kin* be de sinator? Don't you ricollick 'bout ole marster?"

But Tena was not in an argumentative mood. Still mildly, she inquired what the difference was.

"Diff'unce?" This time, it was a positive snort of contempt. Tena had some ado to keep her attitude of peaceful inquisitiveness. "Diff'unce? Dey's all de diff'unce in de worl'. When ole marster wus jes' de gov'nor, he didn' do nothin' 'tall, hardly, let 'lone drivin' roun' to de bobbecues in de kerridge, en' shekin' han's wid de ladies, en' tekin' a drink with de gent'mens, en' mekin' de fus' speech

when de noratin' begin; en' dem days, he nuver useter talk mo'n a half-hour er de lak' o' dat. But when he got to be de sinator, he went up dyah to Washin'ton to live, en' he nuver open his mouth at de speechifyin' widout he talked a whole mornin'. Leas'-ways"—and here once more his voice lost its hearty contentiousness, and for the fiftieth time his eyes were wandering helplessly to the portraits—"leas'-ways, dat's how t'wus tell after he kilt Marse Sinator Underwood in dat juel, en' brek' off Marse Hinry's 'gagement wid Miss Marg'ret, 'cause she Marse Sinator Underwood's step-daughter, en' her ma 'ou' n' let 'er mah'y Marse Hinry after dat, en' de news come dat night en' skeered ole mist'iss to death, 'cause our little Miss Bev'ley jes' been borned. En' hit eighteen years ago dis ve'y night! After dat, ole marster ain' mek' no mo' long speeches. 'Peared lak' he hate to open his mouth 'bout anything, after dat."

There was a tremor in his voice as his vigorous speech came to this rambling, weak conclusion. Tena's chance had come.

"I ermembers," she said; and her tone was very tender. But for a little while he said nothing, and stood looking steadily out of the doorway, his heavy brows contracted. When he began again, his combativeness was quite gone.

"Tena, you know who 'tis comin' home wid Miss Bev'ley f'um dat bo'din' school in Virginia? Hit's de same little El'nor Underwood whah come wid de fun'al percession when dey bu'ied Miss Marg'ret over dyah in our graveyard, 'cause she say she wan' be whar Marse Hinry kin res' by her side when he die too. Hit's Miss Marg'ret's own half-sister. Hit's de own daughter to ole Sinator Underwood, whut our ole marster kilt in dat juel. En' *she* comin' here dis night, en' *hit* Chrismus eve. I 'clar, I gwine 'stracted stud'in 'bout it." His voice was actually breaking, and his whole frame was trembling. He went on plaintively: "*Huc*come Marse Sinator Underwood's daughter comin' heah to de Cedars? Is anybody ever see one o' dem Underwood niggers on dis plantation sence dat day, let

'lone de white fo'ks? Ain't Marse Robert Underwood tried to git Marse Hinry to fight him a juel, en' Marse Hinry cyarn' do it 'cause he promus't ole mist'iss dat night, when she layin' dyah dyin', dat he ain' nuver gwine fight no juel long as he live? Ain't you watched Marse Hinry en' Miss Joanna sence de letter come f'um de chilluns in Virginia? I tell you, I don' comperhend it. I don' know *whut* Marse Hinry gwine do."

With a quick movement Tena turned to the old man, doubtless to word the sympathy she surely felt; but at that moment she saw Miss Joanna coming down the stairs. Instantly, with a transition possible only to such servants as the old régime bred, she ceased to be Lewis's fellow-councillor in his earnest battling with the situation and became, instead, merely the submissive retainer. Her whispered "Heah Miss Joanna!" was enough to effect a like change in him. His heaving breast grew still. Only a practised eye could have discerned the traces of perplexity in his face.

But Miss Joanna's eye was practised. Unlike the other Seldens as she was, she had lived in Selden households sixty years, and knew their ways; and there were no better Seldens anywhere than the Selden negroes. To be a Selden or a servant of Seldens was to despise all outward show of violent emotion. Of that veiled intensity of feeling which characterized the others of her family Miss Joanna was, indeed, supposed to be destitute. She could be grave, but not severe; sympathetic, but not enthusiastic; grieved, but not angry. A gentle illumination of her placid features was the nearest she ever came to laughing. She wept, indeed, not infrequently, but always mildly, and never sobbed. Her place in the household at The Cedars in old Governor Selden's time was aptly described by Major Watkins, when some one remarked that Miss Joanna was very unlike her brother.

"Why, sir," said the major, "she had to be unlike him. Gov'nor Selden, sir, is my frien', but I feel boun' to admit that under provocation he's about the hardest man to handle I

ever saw. You can't handle him, sir, not even if you *are* a woman — an' Miss Joanna don't try. The woman that lives at The Cedars has got to put up with the fact that the Selden men can't be handled."

Nevertheless, Miss Joanna's placidity was not indifference, and it was not ignorance of stormier tempers. She had not lived all her life in an atmosphere of such a silently electrical quality without learning to mark the signs of perturbation. A glance had revealed to her the unrest of Lewis's spirit, and her eyes also turned to the portraits when Tena had gone for another inspection of the rooms. She sighed in her gentle way before she spoke.

"Well, Lewis," she said kindly, "our babies will be here directly. Only to think of it! Fitzhugh's a captain, and has been through a whole war since his last furlough. And Eleanor Underwood is coming to The Cedars!"

"Yes, mist'iss," said Lewis. "I been stud'in' 'bout it all dis day."

"It seems so strange that she should be willing to come," Miss Joanna went on, after

a pause; "and on this night, of all nights in the year. Lewis, you remember—Margaret?"

"Dat I does, mist'iss," said the old man, earnestly, "dat I does. Don't you ricollick, I wus wid Marse Hinry when he rid over to Hill Top dat night—de night ole mist'iss died, en' little Miss Bev'ley wus born? Dat wus de las' time Marse Hinry uver seed Miss Marg'ret in her life. I ain' *nuver* gwine forgit dat night. I knowed sum'p'n turrible done happen, de minute Major Watkins rid up to de do'; en' when Marse Hinry come out 'n ole mist'iss' room lookin' lak' he clean wo' out, en' say she dead, en' tell me to git de horses, I ain' even ax 'im whar we gwine. I knowed we wus gwine to Hill Top. En' when I looked into de hall dyah at Hill Top, en' seed Miss Marg'ret comin' down dem styahs, I couldn' tell which de paler, she er Marse Hinry. I sez to myself: 'D' ain' gwine be no weddin' at Hill Top *dis* Chris'mus. Hit's mo' likely dey's gwine be a fun'al.' I kin see Miss Marg'ret dis ve'y minute es she come down dem styahs, wid her eyes wide open, lookin'

at Marse Hinry lak' she beggin' 'im not to tell 'er de trut'. En' when her ma come in, I could heah Marse Hinry pleadin' wid 'er, en' sayin' dat love ought to be stronger dan death. En' den Marse Robert Underwood, he come in th'ough de side do', 'en Miss Marg'ret's ma say sum'p'n to him, en' he cross de hall widout lookin' at Marse Hinry, en' led Miss Marg'ret out er dyah. En' dis heah little Miss El'nor,— whah wus jes' a little bitsy thing den, holdin' on to Miss Marg'ret's dress, — she stood dyah 'bout a minute after dey all lef', lookin' up in Marse Hinry's face ; en' den she bust out cryin' en' runned away. En' I hed to lead Marse Hinry out'n dat house jes' lak' he wus a bline man."

Miss Joanna's eyes had slowly filled with tears. He paused, and then, glancing with positive terror at the gentle face on the canvas above him, and dropping his voice almost to a whisper, he added : —

" En', mist'iss, how we know she ain' gwine *look* lak' Miss Marg'ret ? I know she jes' Miss Marg'ret's half-sister, but I heah tell she teck

after her ma's people, en' don' favor dem Underwoods at all. Ef she *do* favor Miss Marg'ret, en' her voice soun' lak' Miss Marg'ret's voice, I tell you, mist'iss, 'tain' *nobody* kin say whut Marse Hinry gwine do."

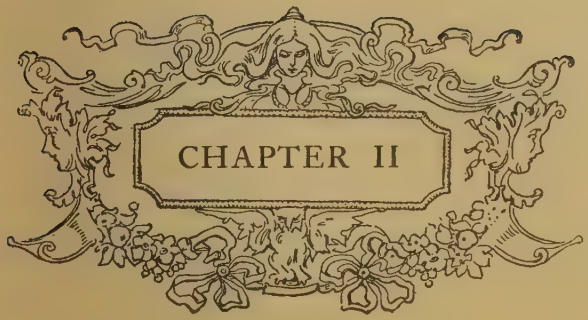
Miss Joanna made no response. She slowly dried her eyes and stood gazing into the fire until a noise of carriage wheels on the avenue roused her from the sad revery into which she had fallen. Meanwhile, the servants, old and young, had been gathering about the doorway, and before the carriage reached the steps their cries of welcome heralded the approach of "the children." Lewis turned to the door, but Tena, dashing down the stairs, was too quick for him.

"Dyah dey is!" she cried. "Dyah my chilluns! I seen 'em fus' f'um de pink room winder!"

And she and Lewis ran out to meet the carriage. Even Miss Joanna started somewhat hurriedly toward the door; but she calmed herself, and stood patiently waiting until Beverley and Fitzhugh should make their

way through the grinning servants who crowded so thickly about the carriage that Tom, the driver, for all his fierce scowls and shaking of the whip, failed to bring his charges to the steps with the proper triumphant swing.

CHAPTER II



CHAPTER II

MAJOR WATKINS was wrong when he said no woman fond of having her own way could find a place at The Cedars. He should have waited for Beverley to grow up before he generalized so sweepingly. She was a baby when he made that remark. Now, on her eighteenth birthday, though she was still so absurdly small in stature that no Selden man could kiss her dear little lips without bending lower than Selden men liked to, she was excellent evidence against the major's view. The major's premises were Governor Selden's wife and his sister; but Governor Selden's daughter was — his daughter. When she was still a child in short skirts, she went

into the library once, when the governor refused to see a committee from the legislature, come to reason with him about his stand on the bank question, and told him the committeemen were his guests, since they were at The Cedars, and brought him out into the hall to make his haughty bow and say a word or two of formal courtesy. And when he was away in Washington, it was she who always scolded the younger house-servants when they trifled, and she also who coaxed Lewis and Tena into good humor when they undertook to discipline the younger set. She, and she only, could look into her brother Henry's eyes — "Brubber," she always called him — and draw them from the ground, even when his gravest mood came on. One moonlight night, she went alone into the family burial-ground, and found him sitting on the stone bench there, and took his hand, and led him back into the house, and sat resolutely at his feet, looking up into his face, until he pushed back her hair and kissed her, with that slow smile of his which was more

of the eyes than of the lips, and went calmly to his books.

"Look out, Beverley! You'll break your neck," cried Fitzhugh, as the carriage came to a stop. But the little lady was over the wheel and in Tena's arms before the warning was finished. The next instant, she had bounded through the doorway, and Miss Joanna was gasping in her embraces. Releasing her aunt, she went dancing about the hall.

"Oh, goody!" she cried. "I always wanted to go away somewhere, so I could come home to The Cedars on Christmas eve. Hasn't Brubber got back with his old Governor Burwell yet? Uncle Tom told us he had gone to meet him instead of coming for us."

But Miss Joanna's eyes were fixed in startled surprise on the door, where, with a grave courtesy, Fitzhugh was making a way for a tall, slight girl, some years older than Beverley, whose eyes, gentle and beautiful, met Miss Joanna's with a trustful, almost appealing expression. It was a sweet and girlish face, but Miss Joanna had lost her wonted

composure at the sight of it; for face and eyes were marvellously like the portrait on the wall. As for Lewis, his worst fears had come true. He stood staring apathetically at the newcomer until Tena caught his arm and pointed to the trunks. As he stumbled toward them, he murmured to himself: "Name er Gord, she *do* favor Miss Marg'ret!"

Miss Joanna, recovering quickly from her surprise, greeted her nephew lovingly, and advanced to the stranger, took her hand, kissed her forehead gently, and led her to the fire.

"You are welcome to The Cedars, my dear," she said. "You are strangely like your sister Margaret, whom we loved. It is almost as if she herself had come back to us out of the long ago."

"You could give me no sweeter welcome," said the girl. "For her sake, will you forgive me for coming, and for bringing back — the long ago?"

Lewis was passing with a trunk on his shoulder. At the sound of her voice, he stumbled, and the trunk fell to the floor with a bang.

Tena, outraged at his clumsiness, began to upbraid him; but he only groaned, in a tone of utter despair, "En' her *voice* Miss Marg'ret's, too!"

Miss Joanna kept the girl's hand, murmuring old-fashioned phrases of welcome and hospitality, until Beverley, who had been chattering with the servants at the door, took possession of her guest and whirled her upstairs, shouting over the banisters that she was to be informed the minute "Brubber" returned. Miss Joanna sank into a chair, and Fitzhugh, dismissing the servants, came and stood beside her in silence, and bent and kissed her forehead. She took his hand, and for a little while neither spoke.

Finally, he asked: "Are you displeased with us, Aunt Joe, for bringing Miss Underwood to The Cedars? She and Beverley made friends in Virginia, you know, and for months they have been inseparable. Will it be very hard on Henry?"

"I can't tell, my dear. You know how he always hides his feelings. He has said

nothing since the letter came, but I fear he has been much — disquieted."

"She wishes to see him — him especially, — for some reason which she has not told me; but she will leave at once for Hill Top if she finds that her presence here gives him pain. Mr. Robert Underwood is in Washington, but she isn't afraid to stay at Hill Top with the overseer's family. My old room?" he added, turning to the stairs.

"Yes, it's just as you left it. You must all dress quickly, and have something to eat. Supper won't be served until ten. There are to be some guests. It is the first time we have had a party at The Cedars since — Monterey."

"Yes, I know," he said, gravely, and in silence passed up the stairs to his room. The old lady stood looking after his tall young figure for a moment, and then came back and gazed into the fire. She seemed unaware of Lewis when he came downstairs and again took his stand at the door, but when a second carriage was heard coming up the avenue she

turned, gave him a look of sympathy, and left the hall.

Governor Burwell's voice saluted Lewis with a hearty greeting when the old man appeared at the door. His master paused a moment to inquire whether the children had come, and then followed the governor into the hall.

I have often, in these later years, tried to analyze the charm of Selden's face and manner, but I never could to the satisfaction of my own memory. How, then, shall I convey it to others? His beauty, so far as it was merely physical, was not of a very rare type. There are many tall men with brown hair and gray eyes, and in our old Southern society a stately and gentle bearing was not rare. But of all Southern gentlemen of the old days there was only one who ever strongly reminded me of Selden, and that was the great captain of our armies in the long war between the states. The chief, however, as we, his followers, best remember him, was near the age of sixty, and his hair was whitening, while Selden, at the time of which I write, could not have been

much beyond forty, and notwithstanding the constant gravity of his manner, the subdued sadness of his face, there was about him always an air of almost boyish sincerity, not, I think, to be wholly explained by the purity in which he lived. Once or twice, in recent years, I have seemed to find in the eyes of certain artists of my acquaintance a musing light somewhat akin to his habitual expression, and the late Mr. Edwin Booth, the actor, had a look that strongly reminded me of him — not, I mean, in any of the characters which the eminent tragedian portrayed on the stage, but when, in his own proper person, one encountered him wandering along the crowded streets of our great eastern cities. Indeed, I am convinced that the bent of Selden's mind was strongly artistic and poetical, and that this could be made to explain some things in his life which puzzled those who knew him best. My notion is, that the love of beauty was always a ruling passion in him, and tended to keep him separate from his fellows, for the spirit of the South was drawn rather to politics and gov-

ernment and war-making than to the study of the beautiful. There was, however, no trace in Selden's face or manner of a pathetic weakness one often finds in men of the artistic bent. There was nothing to indicate any lack of the iron strength of purpose so notable in the men of his family, and particularly in his distinguished father. It was, indeed, a face in which one might clearly read a will triumphant over passion and caprice, but the final charm of it was not in that, nor in anything I can put into words. Perhaps what I am going to relate will help the reader to a notion of it. Save Robert Underwood, I believe no man or woman ever looked into his eyes without an impulse to love him. Nay, I believe even Robert himself, poisoned as his heart was with bitter memories, and pride, and hate, felt the compelling sweetness of the man he hated, though he never yielded to it, and in the end it only strengthened his hatred.

Burwell, bearded, lively, good-natured, was a good foil to his friend. About him there was little to suggest the artistic or the spirit-

ual. A frank, manly gentleman, his manner was of a sort, at once ornate and hearty, that accorded well with his station in life and his successful public career. In those days, political eminence in the Black Belt was usually attained through personal popularity, and the governor, though he never fawned or hid his mind, had few enemies. Indeed, in that society, caution and policy and intrigue did not carry men far into public favor. The people had too acute a feeling for the personalities of their leaders. They liked the governor because he was honest and manly and a gentleman, and that, to their way of looking at the matter, was reason enough why they should honor him with offices. He on his part loved his friends and hated his enemies for their own sakes, and not for the help or hindrance they were to him. Selden he had loved from boyhood, with a love that at bottom was a homage to a finer clay than his own; and it had never occurred to him that his own eminence in public life could ever make him Selden's equal.

The two gentlemen, standing before the ample fire, were good to see, and their voices, as they talked in the direct and simple manner of life-long friendship, were good to hear.

The governor was going on with something he had begun in the carriage, and he was speaking earnestly.

"At least, Henry," he was saying, "you won't make a final decision until you have seen Major Watkins and his committee. They will be here to-night, and I'm relying on the major's eloquence to convince you that you ought to take the nomination. I have set my heart on it. Ever since this vacancy in the House occurred, following so soon upon my own election to the Senate, I have been bent on having you in Washington. Half the pleasure of my own victory would be lost if you refused."

But Selden was smiling, and slowly shaking his head.

"Of course," he said, "I shall have to see Major Watkins and the committee. But if I refuse you, John, is it likely I shall yield to any

one else? I wish you had told me of your plan earlier, before you had built upon it. It would have been easier for me to tell you it was in vain. I a congressman! Why, it would be like taking old Prince out of the pasture, where he has been grazing and philosophizing for years, and entering him in a race with a field of eager young thoroughbreds. Prince's racing days are over, and mine, too, John."

Burwell laid his hand affectionately on the other's shoulder.

"Ah, but Prince is old, and you are not, Henry; and Prince has won many races, and you — you have never run at all. But I don't appeal to you on your own account — I know how much effect that would have. I admit I am perfectly selfish in the matter, except that I consider the district and the state: and the Lord knows the whole South needs every cool-headed man it can send to Washington. But the really important thing is — me. You know I have never taken a step in politics without your advice, your help. What am I going to do in Washington without you?"

A knock at the door interrupted them. The two gentlemen turned from the fire and saw a tall, awkward youth of twenty, red-headed and bashful, standing in the open doorway. He had evidently knocked in order that he might attract their attention before coming near enough to overhear their conversation.

"Oh, come in, Virginius," said Selden; and the boy came forward.

"Good evenin', Mr. Selden," he said. "Fitz an' Miss Bev'ley come home yet, sir?"

"Here at last, Virginius, but I haven't seen them yet myself. You know Governor Burwell, Mr. Evins?"

Virginius awkwardly transferred an enormous bouquet from his right hand to his left, and while he and the governor were shaking hands, Fitzhugh, his toilet finished, appeared at the head of the stairs.

"Henry!" he cried, and came running down to greet his brother.

"Why, Captain!" said Selden; and they shook hands, and looked into each other's eyes an instant, and then turned to their guests.

It was a characteristic Selden greeting. No one ignorant of Selden ways would have guessed that the elder brother had been the younger's idol from childhood, or that the elder loved the younger with such a love as he might have given not to a brother but to a son; or that, since they were last together, war and death had come into their lives. Each, however, had felt the tremor of the other's hand and seen the moisture in the other's eyes; and that was enough.

"Hail, conquering hero!" cried Governor Burwell, gayly, as he shook hands with the young officer.

"He'o, Fitz," said Virginius, as his turn came. "How many Mexicans did you kill?"

"Oh, 'bout a hundred thousand, 'Ginius." Fitzhugh's eyes fell on the huge bouquet, and twinkled. "Did you bring that boutonnière for me?"

Mr. Evins was a trifle embarrassed.

"Naw," he said. "Aunt Anne told me — I mean, *I* brought it — for Miss Beverley."

"*Miss* Beverley, eh? Did Miss Anne tell

you it was time to call her that? Better keep on calling her 'Bev' till she makes you quit."

Fitzhugh turned again to his brother, who from his place at the fireside was smilingly surveying the young man's soldierly figure, and the governor, with ready tact, drew Virginius into conversation.

"Captain Fitzhugh Selden!" said Selden, affectionately. "A veteran of the war with Mexico, sir!"

"Ah," said Fitzhugh, "I can hardly realize that it is two years since I was here. It seems now as if it had all happened in a few weeks."

"And — Monterey?" Selden had grown grave again.

"I was near father when he fell, but I couldn't get to him until the fight was over. He was still conscious when I reached him. I couldn't write and tell all about it then — my arm, you know — and I didn't like to let any one else write. His last message was for you, Henry."

"For me?"

"He spoke first of Beverley and me and Aunt Joanna, and told me he had put into his

will all his wishes about the estate. He told me to take his sword and to hang it up there across the one he wore in the old war. Then he hesitated, and turned his head away; but finally he said, with the old proud manner: 'Tell your brother Henry I regret that many years ago, in defence of my honor, I was compelled to take a step which brought unhappiness to him. I would have made him amends, but I never found a way.'"

Selden did not speak for a little while. He was deeply moved.

"Poor, proud father!" he said at last; and they both glanced at the portraits. But the next instant they had turned courteously to their guests, and Fitzhugh asked Virginius to come with him for a look at the horses before the ladies should come down.

"All right," said Virginius. "Season's been bully so far. I been out ev'y good mornin' since the first o' December, 'cept the day after Uncle Torm died."

Selden was inviting the governor to go upstairs and change his coat when little Miss Bev-

erley, who had heard the voices, peeped over the railing. She saw Selden, but did not see the governor.

"Brubber!" she cried, and came running eagerly down the stairs, her hair no longer "up," and embraced him over the banisters. "You mean thing," she said, "to go off for an old governor instead of coming to meet me. I wanted to tell you about Eleanor."

The governor, with an obsequious bow, stepped forward into the light.

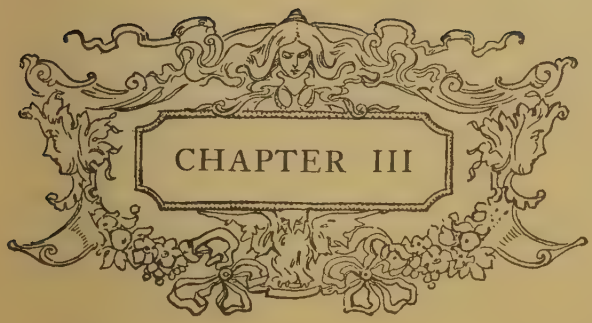
"Good evening, Miss Beverley," he said; but Miss Beverley made a hasty exit up the stairs, catching at her hair.

"By George!" said Burwell, "that child will be a young lady now pretty soon. I'll go up and change my coat. See what Miss Joanna thinks of my plan, Henry. I'm going to set them all after you."

But Selden only smiled, and went back to his place by the fire. He stood there silent for a long time, his elbow on the mantel.

"Thank God," he said at last, "I was able to forgive him before he died."

CHAPTER III



BY this time the hall was somewhat darkened. Only the light from the huge fireplace fell upon the Christmas greens, the hunting trophies, the swords and portraits on the walls. In the shadowy region at the rear Lewis had been waiting patiently for an opportunity to speak to his master alone, and now he came forward.

"Marse Hinry."

Selden did not raise his head.

"Well, Lewis?"

"Marse Hinry," said the old man, earnestly, "is you seen her yit?"

Selden looked up.

"Seen whom, Lewis?"

"Miss El'nor, Marse Hinry — Miss Marg'ret's sister. Is you seen her yit?"

"No, not yet." Selden's head again drooped forward on his hand. "It's like old times to-night, Lewis."

"Yes, Marse Hinry, hit showly is. I been stud'in' 'bout it all day — 'bout dat yuther Chris'mus when we rid over to Hill Top."

But his master made no answer. Lewis drew back again into the shadows, and Selden, thinking he had left the hall, drew his hands over his eyes, and sank still deeper into his revery.

"Dat yuther Chris'mus!" Was there a day of his life, these eighteen years — was there a waking hour — when he had once forgotten it? And to-night, for all the quiet days and nights between, was it not all as yesterday? The long, cold ride; the great hall at Hill Top, where he waited until she should come and tell him his fate; and at last her face, sweet and pale and trustful, looking down upon him, like some unhappy angel's, from the stairway where she stood — could he not see her now as he saw her then? Could he not hear the

very rustle of her dress upon the stairs, her dear voice calling his name? Such, surely, must have been the current of his thought, for suddenly, as if to shake off a dream, he turned with a convulsive movement toward the stairs, throwing his head back and his hand aloft, the lover's pleading in his eyes. But he stopped like one transfixed, his eyes distended, his hand still in the air. Lewis, in terror, followed the direction of his gaze, and there, halfway down the stairs, the likeness to the dead Margaret enhanced by her attitude, by the half light, and by the frightened look she wore, was Eleanor Underwood. The terrified old negro glanced beseechingly from her to Selden, then crept away and left his master to the cruel agony of his surprise.

Eleanor came slowly down the stairs. Timidly she approached him; but he did not move or speak.

"Mr. Henry Selden?" she asked.

He bowed mechanically. His hand sank slowly to his side.

"I — I am Eleanor Underwood," she fal-

tered. Still speechless, he bowed again, and the trembling girl went on. "I feared it would pain you to see me, sir, and now I know it was wrong to come. But Beverley urged it so, and I — I wished to see you, sir, to beg a favor at your hands."

A moment more, and he had mastered his emotion.

"Pray forgive my rudeness," he said. "I was thinking of — of your sister Margaret — when you came, and you are strangely like her. Only an old bachelor's memories, you know," — and he forced his white lips into a smile. "You are very welcome at The Cedars, and if there is indeed any service I can render you, you have but to name it. 'Little Eleanor!' I needn't say, 'Miss Underwood,' need I?"

"Oh, no, indeed," said Eleanor, brightening as the deathly pallor left his face.

"And you remembered me?"

"How could I forget you, sir? Child as I was, I was my sister's only confidante, and she never spoke of you to any one but me after — that night. And so, somehow, I have

grown up with a feeling that some day I should know you, sir, myself, and that I might come to you for help if I were ever in — distress."

"Distress?"

"It is about my father, sir."

"About Senator Underwood?"

"About his memory, yes."

"Will you tell me what it is?"

"Then you have not heard of this measure which Congress is threatening to pass?"

But he merely shook his head and looked at her inquiringly. And she went on, encouraged by his earnest eyes, to tell him the story.

Long before she was born, she said, and before Hill Top was built, her father had been commissioner in residence among the Indians, who still inhabited all that region about Hill Top and The Cedars. After the final treaty with them, which he himself had negotiated with Pushmataha, the famous war chief, he had brought his servants from Virginia and become a cotton planter. He had built Hill Top on a tract of land which he had

bought from Pushmataha ; for he and the chief were friends. But of late years, Pushmataha being long since dead, the Indians had begun to claim through their agents at Washington that Senator Underwood defrauded them of this land while he was a commissioner among them. A bill had been introduced to give them reparation, and in the preamble Senator Underwood's name appeared. It was there declared that he defrauded the Indians of their land.

Selden interrupted her.

" But your brother, Mr. Robert Underwood, knows that that charge is false. Surely he has the means to prove it."

" The records were all destroyed," she said, " when the office at Hill Top was burned, shortly after my father's death. Robert has many enemies in Congress who find in this measure an opportunity to bring him to shame; and somehow, the Indians themselves seem to regard him with a peculiar hatred."

Selden's face showed a sudden intelligence. Eleanor paused and looked at him ; but he remained silent, and she went on.

"I had heard my sister Margaret say that you loved my father, sir, and that you and Robert, when you were boys, often went with him among the Indians, and that you were at Hill Top the last time Pushmataha was ever there. And so — and so I thought you might know something of this charge, and be willing to help us, sir. I thought that perhaps a word from you to some of the leaders at Washington would have much weight, because it is so well known that your father — that Governor Selden — I — I mean — about the duel, sir."

She had gone on bravely, but now she faltered, and was on the point of weeping. Selden hesitated; her distress, the tremor in her voice, the tears in her eyes, were hard to resist.

"But your brother Robert," he asked, — "does he know that you have come? Will he accept my help — my coöperation — even in this?"

Her head was drooping.

"No, sir," she said, "he does not know that I have come. He is very proud. I fear he will

never forgive me for coming. I had indeed another reason for coming, but — but I cannot tell you what it was, sir. You, too, will think strangely of me."

He hesitated no longer, but took her hand in his, as though she were still a little child.

"No," he said, "I think I understand. If your coming shall enable me to do any service to your dear father's memory, it is I who shall be the debtor. I did indeed love him, and owe him a long debt of gratitude. Perhaps I may do something even now to make amends for the cruel wrong that was done to him, and — and — to others, — and to you also, my dear, when you were little more than a baby in your cradle. Robert, I know, cannot see me or think of me without bitterness; but surely he will not be angry when he knows my mission in Washington. I swore to my mother, when she lay dying in yonder chamber, that I would give up forever the bloody creed which had been taught me from my childhood, and which that day had brought so much sorrow into all our lives. The next day, Robert tried to force me into a

duel, and I bore his insult. I shall not be weaker now. Yes, little Eleanor, I will go to Washington and we will try to set this matter right." He smiled at the end, and lifted her hand to his lips.

They were standing there beneath the portraits when Beverley and the governor came downstairs together, the governor giving the little lady his hand with ceremonious humility, and she, on her part, assuming much stateliness of demeanor. But her stateliness vanished before she reached the bottom. She broke from the governor and ran to Eleanor and Selden.

"Why, Eleanor," she cried, "did you beat me dressing?" She stopped short, and looked quickly from one to the other of their faces. "This is Brubber's Governor Burwell, Eleanor."

When, a moment later, Miss Joanna came in to greet the governor, Beverley drew Eleanor and her brother away to traverse the other rooms. Burwell, left alone with Miss Joanna, lost no time in bringing before her the subject of Selden's nomination, and asked her to urge

him to accept it. He spoke with earnestness and enthusiasm of the career that still awaited his friend if he could be persuaded to take up the interests and ambitions which in his youth he had begun to pursue. The state, he said, had a right to look for leadership to one who, like Governor Selden's son, had been trained to statecraft, and whose abilities and character fitted him for high services.

Miss Joanna listened in silence, and did not seem to share the governor's enthusiasm.

"I will speak to him if you wish, John," she said, "but I can scarcely hope that he will change his mind. Indeed, I cannot say I really wish him to change his mind, or to change his way of life. It is certainly a good and beautiful life as it is, John."

"For that matter," said the governor, "I agree with you, you know. I think he is the very best man in the world, Miss Joanna. But is that a good reason why we should keep him to ourselves? If you had known his wonderful brilliancy and promise at the University as I did, if you had watched his

first beginnings in politics, and seen his wonderful ascendency over other men, you would feel, as I do, that we have no right to keep him to ourselves. It is not merely his ability and strength of character. He wins men's love; he has no enemies."

"You forget Robert Underwood."

"Yes, I suppose Robert's pride will not permit him to be friendly with any of your family, and he has been jealous of Henry all his life. He was the only man at the University who did not accept Henry's superiority to all of us as a matter of course. I believe, too, that he was really Henry's rival with poor Margaret Hilliard — she was only Robert's step-sister, you know. But surely, Henry need fear no real hindrance from him. I don't believe even the Democrats will follow him much longer."

"Yes; but I believe it was mainly to avoid Robert Underwood that Henry first withdrew himself from the world."

They could not pursue the subject farther, for Selden left the others and came back to

join them; and the governor soon discovered that some powerful influence had been fighting his battle for him. He had not bethought himself of securing little Beverley for an ally, but later he came to value her very highly in that rôle.

Selden was clearly shaken in his resolution.

"John," he said, "I have learned something to-night which makes me think more seriously of the committee's offer. It is only the nomination for Kendall's unexpired term which they come to bring, is it not?"

"Yes," said Burwell, "but you would have no opposition for the full term, I am sure."

"You misunderstand me. I wish to know whether, if I accepted, I should be under any obligation to remain in Washington longer than March."

"No, this is the short session."

"Then tell me this, John. Do you think the district or the state would suffer from incompetent representation during the remainder of the present session?"

"No," said Burwell, smiling, "not even if

the representative were as incompetent as you are. He would be a new man, in any case, and could scarcely hope to make himself felt before the end of the session, as Congress will be busy with the appropriations. You are going to accept, Henry?"

But Selden would not yet promise. He must see the committee first, he said.

The reëntrance of Fitzhugh and Virginius and the return of the ladies again interrupted them. Virginius at once bore down on Beverley with his bouquet. He was flushed and awkward.

"Good ev'nin', Miss Bev'ley," he said. She had started to meet him with both hands outstretched, but now she drew back with an expression of mock indignation.

"*Miss* Beverley? But I'm not eighteen yet. I don't want to be eighteen until after we've danced the reel."

Virginius grinned, and looked sheepish.

"He'o, Bev," he said.

"He'o, 'Ginius," she laughed, and they shook hands like the comrades they had always been. Virginius held out the flowers.

"Aunt Anne said your hair would be up," he explained.

She made a funny face, and held the great mass of flowers against her little head; whereupon the governor took occasion to compliment Mr. Evins on his taste, and to comment on the advantages of having one's hair up. They were all chattering together in the centre of the hall when Selden, hearing a carriage, warned them that they must run away to the dining room, for the guests would be coming soon. He himself remained to see the committee, for it proved to be their carriage.

Major Watkins, entering at the head of the committee, seemed to hesitate between his ordinary attitude of an old-time friend to the family at The Cedars and the more stately demeanor proper to the leader and spokesman of the Whig party of the district. He greeted Selden with a cordial handshake and a cheery "How are you, Hinry?" But the next moment, when the committee had finished their greetings and were seated, and Selden stood in his habitual posture by the fireside, awaiting

the formal announcement of their mission, the major drew up his rotund figure, cleared his throat portentously, and looked extremely solemn.

"Mr. Selden," he said impressively, "you air aware, I presume, that these gentlemen and I have waited on you as a sub-committee of the Whig committee of this distric', sir."

"Yes, Major," said Selden, "Governor Burwell has been telling me of the committee's action."

But the major was not to be deprived of the function of announcement.

"You have doubtless received informal notice of the vote, sir, but we have come toe formally — er — inform you that the committee, sir, by virtue of the authority conferred on it by the party when last in convention assembled, has unanimously nomernated you for the high office of representative in the Cong'ess of the United States, sir."

Selden did not smile.

"The honor is most unexpected, Major, and I thank the committee heartily. But, gentle-

men, you know I have had no part in public affairs since I was a very young man. Do you think it safe to nominate one so inexperienced — a mere tyro, in fact — for so high an office?"

"The committee, sir," said the major, "has considered the matter ca'mly an' deliberately. It is true, sir, that you have preferred the life of a Southern gentleman on yo' elegant plantation toe the arduous cares of politics. But, sir, you air not unknown. There is no part of the district in which you air not known an' respected, an' I may say loved." He turned to the committee for confirmation, and they vigorously nodded their approval. One of them remarked: "Yes, Mr. Selden, you know you've got land in eve'y county in the district but one." Another, an excitable little man, a small farmer from the next county, broke in: —

"Yes, sir, Mr. Selden, sir, an' there ain't nary farmer within ten miles o' any one o' yo' plantations that you ain't he'ped out er some sort er werriment er yuther. May be you've forgot the time you come over with yo' han's

an' ploughed my fiel' when me an' my ole lady wus both laid up with chills an' fever, but *I* ain't forgot it. There was six men on that 'ere committee that up an' said you wus the bes' frien' they had in the worl', sir, an' they'd jes' like to vote fer you fer President of the Newnited States, sir, let 'lone a cong'essman."

The little man was trembling with his fervor. Selden was touched, and he did not wait for the major, who was clearing his throat and waving his hand, preparatory to resuming his speech, after the manner of a debater whose colleague has corroborated his statement.

"Gentlemen," said Selden, "you are very kind — you are all very kind. I must confess that until a few moments ago I had not meant to accept your offer, for I am long wedded to my quiet life here in the country. But I have learned to-night that perhaps, in the short remainder of the present session of Congress, I may help to avert a grievous wrong that threatens the memory of an honest man who once served the state faithfully, and whom I loved and honored. I

cannot, indeed, promise to take any part in the political battles of the day, but Governor Burwell assures me that Congress will be mainly engaged with routine measures until it adjourns, and that therefore no great interest would be endangered if I served until March. Is this your mind, also?"

"I presume, sir," said the major, "that Governor Burwell is right; but next session —"

"But," said Selden, "the nomination you offer is only for the remainder of the present session, is it not?"

"Yes, sir; a convention will be called to nomernate a candidate for the full term."

"Then, gentlemen," said Selden, slowly, and looking down thoughtfully at the floor, "I accept your nomination."

The major, in his delight, forgot his pose.

"Ah, Hinry," he exclaimed, grasping Selden's hand, "I cert'n'y am glad to hear you say it." But he instantly recovered himself; he had not yet made his speech. So he drew himself up, looked around rather fiercely at the committee, and began afresh.

"I need scahcely say, sir, that I have long regarded with impatience — I may say, with vexation — yo' indifference toe the political questions of the day. Sir, I am proud to say that yo' honored father was my friend, an' I have no doubt that you inherit a goodly share of the eloquence an' the public virtue which distinguished him in the stations toe which he was successively — er — sublimated, I might say — on the shoulders of his admiring constituents. The nomernation of the Whig party of this distric' is, as you air doubtless aware, equivalent toe an election. Thairefo', on behalf of this committee" — turning and bowing to the committee, who in turn bowed and looked important — "an' of the brave men an' fair women of this sunny an' — er — salubrious distric', I congratulate you befo'han' on yo' accession toe an office which you air so well fitted toe fill, sir, an' toe adorn."

The major was permitted to go no farther. His tones, growing more and more sonorous, had penetrated to the dining room, and Governor Burwell, napkin in hand, came running into the hall.

"Bravo! He has accepted!" he shouted back to the others. Beverley, too, ran to her brother and threw her arms about him.

It was but a little while before the guests of the evening had begun to arrive, and the hall was ringing with merry Christmas greetings and shouts and laughter. Governor Burwell was earnest in his congratulations to Major Watkins on the eloquence which, he assured him, had overcome Selden's repugnance to public life.

"Well, Governor," said the major, "I did the best I could, but you boys don't need me any longer. I'm gettin' too old, an' my throat's too rusty."

"Nonsense, Major!" cried the governor. "Here's something that will fix your throat trouble." And turning to the servant who was entering with a great bowl of egg-nog, he called on them all to fill their glasses and drink the health of "Our next congressman, the Honorable Henry Selden, of The Cedars."

Eleanor had been watching for an opportunity to speak to Selden alone; but the

opportunity did not come until they were all pairing off for the first quadrille.

"Oh, Mr. Selden," she said, "is it for my sake you have done this?"

"For your sake, and for your father's sake, and for — for the old times' sake, little Eleanor," he said.

"I know how hard it must be for you to give up your beautiful life here at The Cedars and go back into that vulgar world at Washington. I can give you only a girl's simple thanks, sir, but I know that *she* would thank you, and bless you, if she could know."

He bowed, and turned his eyes away. The negro musicians had made ready, and Fitzhugh came to claim her for the dance. Selden kept his place by the fireside, and he was smiling. But old Lewis, glancing now and then at his master, kept shaking his head and muttering to himself, between the figures he was calling: "En hit Chris'mus eve! En hit Chris'mus eve!"

CHAPTER IV

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BUT during the fortnight following Christmas, while Selden was busied with the election, and then with the preparations for his departure, there was nothing in his manner and bearing to justify old Lewis's fear that some change might come over his master. Selden, in fact, took pains to assure his neighbors that he did not mean to go permanently into public life, and informed the politicians of the district that he would not remain in Washington longer than March. Meanwhile, his life at The Cedars was just what it had been for eighteen years.

During all those years he had really been master there, for his father's time had been

given almost wholly to politics. When the son drew back on the threshold of the career for which he had been carefully trained, Governor Selden — he was called by that title even after he became a senator — had relinquished to him the management of the estate, and had himself shown a disposition to live anywhere rather than at The Cedars. In consequence, the two had met but seldom after the death of Selden's mother, and their intercourse had been characterized by formal courtesy rather than any show of affection. True, they had never quarrelled, and no word of reproach from the son or of self-defence from the father had ever brought to the surface the bitter memories that filled the minds of both. Doubtless, both felt that it was best for them to live apart, and not even little Beverley had ever succeeded in drawing them together. Never jovial or companionable, Governor Selden, in his later years, seemed to have lost interest in everything but the one great purpose of his public career. That was the steadfast assertion of the dogma

of Southern rights; and when, in the war with Mexico, he found an opportunity to give his life for his section and his idea, the end was doubtless such as he would have chosen. He had been bred to the profession of arms, and his rugged frame, notwithstanding his years, was easily equal to the fatigue and hardships of the brief campaign that preceded the battle in which he fell. He came of a line of soldiers, and it seemed altogether fitting that the word "General" should be carved on his gravestone along with the civil titles he had won.

Many thought, from the quiet, unadventurous life the son had chosen, that in him the timid, soft-eyed mother, and not the iron father, chiefly survived. Certainly, for that region and those times, and for a man of his breeding, the choice was somewhat strange. The patriarchal mode of life which grew out of slavery had given to the society of the South a dignity and an outward show of stability characteristic of ancient rather than extremely youthful communities; but the Black Belt was still a very raw country, with many things to

indicate the barbarism from which it had been brought so quickly by masterful men into a state of civilization — though not, indeed, entirely modern civilization. For miles and miles around The Cedars, no town or city broke the dull monotony of forests and cotton fields. Year by year, as the wasteful processes of slavery sapped the virtue from the soil, new fields were won from the forests; but still no mill or factory or furnace heralded those mighty and complex industrial forces that give our modern life its essential character. To live on at The Cedars meant not merely that Selden should fail to take his place among the leaders of his people; it meant also that he should never be caught up and borne along by any strong current of human life. It meant that for communion with his spiritual fellows he must go to books; that for worthy exercise of its unusual powers his mind must fall back upon the big, naked problems of life. The high hopes, the brief passion, the bitter sorrow of his youth must stand for human experience to his chastened manhood.

Yet to such serenity had he attained that none of those who marvelled at his choice ever spoke of him in mere pity. The settled calm of his face, the peace of his gray eyes, gave no man the right to call him unhappy. He showed, in fact, no signs of restlessness in his planter's life, but lived it on as simply as though he had never contemplated any other. Only little Beverley, when sometimes she came upon him unawares, ever tried to read the mystery of his straining gaze into the white clouds of the breathless summer days or the starlit brilliancy of the Southern skies at night. The little creature would often end by throwing herself upon his breast in an agony of helpless sympathy.

Always, such fits of hers were followed by periods of what in her corresponded no doubt to the thing which Tena called "mannishness" in boys. While the mood lasted, the younger servants were made thoroughly aware of her place at The Cedars, and her playmate, Virginius Evins, led a vexed and mystified existence.

As for Fitzhugh, when he was at home on

his rare furloughs, he never thought to question the wisdom or the rightness of his brother's life. For Selden's image had always been the first to rise before his mind's eye when one spoke of "honor," or "duty," or a "gentleman."

Yet many, as I have said, set it down to some woman-softness in his nature, that Selden had lost so completely the impulse which carries strong men into the strife and battling of their time. Old Lewis, however, could have told them better. With that sure sense of his master's inner quality which the intimacy of loving service gave him, he knew that it was not so. Only once in these eighteen years had he seen the lion in his master's soul, but that once was enough. It was when Selden caught the overseer of the lower plantation in the act of beating Simon's Maria, who was too weak from childbirth to take her place among the cotton pickers. After that, Lewis never doubted that his master, whatever his life might seem to show, was still of the Selden temper.

"I ain' nuver seed Marse Hinry look lak'

ole marster tell dat minute," the old man confided to Tena. "He tuck er holt er dat man lak' he gwine tyah 'im lim' f'om lim', en' he jes' es white es a sheet. Den all uv er sudden he drap 'im on de groun' en' tu'nned roun' en' clam back in de saddle en' rid away wid his head hangin' down on his breas'."

Of Eleanor Underwood, Selden saw but little while she remained at The Cedars. They were alone together still less often; but when they were he gave no signs of the distress which he had shown at her first appearance there and her likeness to her half-sister. The likeness was indeed remarkable, for Eleanor was the daughter of Senator Underwood, and the Underwood features, as they survived in her half-brother, Robert, and as I have noted them in her father's portrait at the State House — I never saw the senator himself — were very unlike her mother's and her sister Margaret's. Robert, like his father, was dark, thin-lipped, almost Latin in appearance and manner. Eleanor, on the contrary, though her eyes also were dark, was rather of the type of those English

women, indefinably changed and softened with their Virginian environment, whose faces one might see on the walls of the older mansions along the Potomac and the James until those pleasant seats were desolated. In character no less than looks she resembled her sister Margaret, who had no Underwood blood in her veins.

But though he talked little with Eleanor, it was clear to Selden that she had found her lot a hard one when, by the death of her mother, she and Robert were left to work out their lives together. Chilled and frightened by his stern way of silence when he was at Hill Top, and left too much alone there during his long absences at Washington, she had gladly taken refuge with her kinsfolk in Virginia, where much of her girlhood was spent. It was there that she came to know Beverley, and afterwards Fitzhugh. Perhaps it was because she had been so little at Hill Top, and had not been constantly reminded of its neighbor, The Cedars, that she could at last bring herself to disregard that grim loyalty

to ancient grudges which was so unhappily characteristic of her half-brother. However, she herself had confessed to Selden that she had a reason for coming to The Cedars which she could not now explain to him. He, on his part, bore himself after the fashion of one who had known her from her childhood, leaving it to "the children" to entertain her.

When she returned to Virginia, Beverley accompanied her. Fitzhugh rejoined his regiment. When Selden went to Washington, Beverley forsook her boarding school and joined him there. Miss Joanna also went with him, and for the first time The Cedars was left to the care of an overseer. It was arranged that Eleanor, too, should come to Washington if it were found that her presence there might be of service. As yet, Robert Underwood, knew nothing of her visit to The Cedars, or of the true reason why Selden was coming out of his retirement. The two men had been playmates in childhood and classmates at the University, but they had not met in eighteen years. Hill Top and

The Cedars, though in different counties, were less than a score of miles apart; but there were graves between them.

The change in Selden's life was not a strange thing for those days in the Black Belt. To pass from the headship of a great plantation to high place in the public councils was not uncommon; and Governor Selden's long career made it seem only natural that his son should take such a step. But when the father's old associates in the national legislature offered to the son a place in their ranks, they were disappointed to find in him so little of the father's spirit. These resolute men, who at that troubled period of our history set their faces so sternly against the assailants of Southern institutions, had looked to find in him a comrade ready, like themselves, to go all lengths in the great sectional conflict that was now apparently nearing its crisis. Of that Spartan band, Robert Underwood was one. But Selden never enrolled himself among them or entered at all into the bitter controversies of the hour. His friend, Senator Burwell,

tried in vain to draw him into the struggle. The contemplative bent his mind had taken from his quiet way of life at The Cedars, from his long brooding over problems vaster than any that legislatures ever dealt with, never yielded to the fascination of the mighty game that was playing before his eyes.

Therefore, I need tell no more of his life in Washington than shall serve to explain how at last he and Robert Underwood were brought face to face. Often, of course, they must have passed each other by in the corridors of the national Capitol, or on the streets of the little city, — the curious, village-like little city, so typical, with its wide avenues leading into open fields, its Grecian columns lending a front of antiquity to edifices yet unfinished, of the young republic itself, still untried of the ordeal which should first give to its wide-reaching hope the pause of realized peril. But always they passed as strangers. Doubtless, to each of them, the other's presence there was of greater moment than any of the momentous happenings they witnessed; but if Robert had learned

why Selden came, he gave no sign. Even when Selden rose in the House and defended Senator Underwood's memory, Robert maintained his cold reserve.

Meanwhile, Governor Burwell had been finding little Beverley a fast ally in all his devices for enmeshing Selden in politics, and out of their many conferences and conspiracies there had come about a comical understanding between the big, kind-hearted man and the clear-purposed little lady who had set herself to manage the affairs of the Selden household, Major Watkins's dictum to the contrary notwithstanding. So far as Selden was concerned, very little came of their scheming, for apparently he saw through their elaborate plans from the first. Returning to his lodgings from one of the numerous conferences of Southern leaders into which, on one pretext or another, Burwell was constantly inveigling him, he would glance with a quiet smile into the corner where they two sat trying to look unconcerned, and they would know that he had again refused to commit himself to any participation in the

struggle. But the conspirators themselves grew more and more absorbed in their enterprise. By the time Eleanor came, Burwell had indeed given up all hope of keeping Selden in Washington after the business that brought him there should be finished; but Beverley would not own that they were beaten.

The morning before Eleanor came, Burwell, who had called for Selden on his way to the Capitol, was explaining to Miss Joanna, who could never understand the ways of Congress, the crisis that had made it seem desirable to summon Eleanor from Virginia. He had found the old lady alone. Beverley was gone to walk with Selden.

"You see, Miss Joanna," Burwell was saying, "it all depends on the committee. Henry's speech — and I wish you had gone to hear that speech, Miss Joanna; you would have forgiven me then and there for bringing him to Washington — Henry's speech so moved the House that it struck out not only the clause about Senator Underwood but the whole appropriation. The bill, as thus

amended, has gone to a Senate committee, and the chairman, the old senator from South Carolina, is so wrapped up in bigger questions that it is hard to get him interested. I fear the old man's memory is failing him, but he has promised a hearing to Henry and Miss Underwood. You know how chivalrous he always has been, and how gentle he is with women. Henry hopes the sight of her may rouse him from his abstraction, and if we can get him interested on our side Gates will never be able to control the committee."

"And Senator Gates — why is he against us?"

"Oh, Gates is one of the men with whom Robert Underwood has had one of his innumerable 'misunderstandings.' Once, when Gates was in the House, he boasted that he was a self-made man, and ridiculed Robert and some of his friends as aristocrats. Robert, in reply, complimented him on his immunity from any suspicion of ancestors. Gates would hardly be human if he did not find satisfaction in a public declaration by Congress that Robert's own father, a Southerner of distinguished family, was

a dishonest man. He and Robert are about as unlike as two disagreeable men can be, and have hated each other cordially for years."

"And has Robert never in any way recognized Henry's help?"

"Never. That man has the pride of the very devil himself, Miss Joanna. The day Henry spoke, Robert sat reading a newspaper, apparently the only indifferent person in the house. Naturally, men glanced often from Henry to him, but he never once raised his eyes while Henry was speaking. I believe he would sooner have seen the bill pass, preamble and all, than have had it defeated — as in fact it was — by Henry's help."

Miss Joanna sighed.

"Poor little Eleanor! I think she had a hope that this might bring about a reconciliation. And now she fears that Robert will refuse to have anything to do with her unless she gives up all friendship with us. I cannot understand such men as Robert — or such men as these Indians. Why do they hate Robert so? His father was their best friend.

I have seen dozens of them camping around Hill Top before they went away to the West."

"I don't understand that myself," said Burwell, thoughtfully. "I have talked with their spokesmen, and it is clear that there is something besides the money in their minds. The other afternoon, Henry and I were walking in the cemetery here, and we came across a group of them standing silent and motionless around Pushmataha's grave — he was buried here, you remember. They glanced at us fiercely, and stalked away. Something in Henry's face made me suspect that he understood, but he never has explained it to me. Can you not guess what it is, Miss Joanna? Did you ever see Pushmataha? Did you know anything of his life?"

"Only that he was highly honored by the white men who knew him. It was he, I believe, who kept the Choctaws friendly when Tecumseh stirred up the Creeks to war. But that was before The Cedars was built. I have heard, though, that he and Mr. Underwood were comrades in the old war, and

that once he rescued Mr. Underwood from great danger. I know he was at Hill Top not long before he came to Washington and died. I did not see him, but I believe Henry was there at the time."

Burwell shook his head.

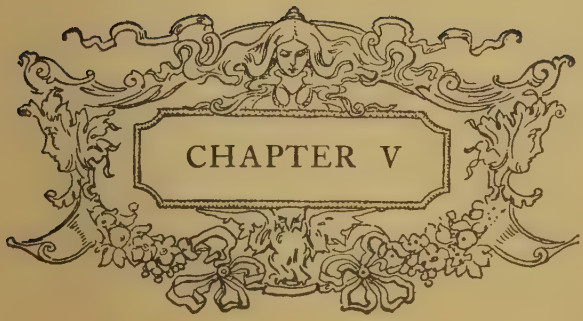
"What puzzles me is that the chief and Senator Underwood were friends until Pushmataha's death, and that so soon afterwards the Indians came to hate the Underwoods, and brought this charge of fraud against them. Well," he added with a smile, "little Miss Beverley and I shall have to put our heads together and find out what the matter is. By the way, I haven't seen her since she ran away from me the other afternoon at the President's levee on the arm of that young comrade of Fitzhugh's."

Miss Joanna smiled also.

"She will be back before long. Won't you wait and see her?"

"No, thank you," said the governor, rising and looking at his watch. "I have a committee meeting in half an hour."

CHAPTER V



BUT Governor Burwell seemed to forget about his committee meeting when he turned and found Beverley standing in the doorway. He asked her what she had done with Selden.

"Oh," she said, "I left him with one of your old senators. He wanted Brubber to talk about New Mexico and abolitionists and all that, and he chewed tobacco, and behaved as if he thought I were about twelve years old, and I came away. I didn't suppose a senator cared to have children about when he was occupied with tobacco and affairs of state."

Miss Joanna smiled and left them. Burwell put on a look of grave displeasure.

"Yes," he said, "children *are* troublesome sometimes — especially when they run away from their escorts with handsome young army officers and have to be hunted for all over the White House."

"But how about the escorts who neglect their charges?"

"Why, the President himself had called me aside to — er — discuss an affair of state."

"Very likely — at an afternoon levee. Well, Captain Armour called me aside to discuss an affair of —"

"The heart?"

"Never mind what it was; but it wasn't territories, or provisos, or constitutional rights, or any of those tiresome things Brubber won't get interested in. And he called me 'Miss Selden.'"

"Ah? And what, pray, did you expect him to call you? 'Bev,' like our friend, Mr. Virginius Evins? Shall I say 'Miss Selden,' too?"

"Yes; it helps me to stay dignified. I keep forgetting I'm eighteen."

"But it isn't necessary to be dignified all the time, you know."

"I'm afraid it is, in Washington. All these important old judges and senators and things make me feel awfully young, and I've got to assert myself somehow if I'm going to have my way about Brubber."

"*Our* way, please. But senators aren't always old. There's Senator Sykes, now."

Beverley made a wry face.

"He's worse. He's ugly, and he chews tobacco like all the rest of them. I don't believe I like senators, anyhow. I prefer congressmen, like Brubber."

"And handsome young army officers, like Captain Armour, and red-headed fox hunters, like Mr. Virginius Evins."

Beverley was looking out of the window.

"Did you know," she said demurely, "that we were expecting 'Ginius here to-day? It's the very first time he ever went away from home."

"Really?" The Senator was in his favorite attitude, his back to the fire, his head

thrown backward, one hand on his beard and the other on the lapel of his coat. "I wonder, now, what is bringing the young fellow away from his horses and his hounds. No doubt he wishes to see Miss Joanna, or Henry, or me, perhaps. Fine young man, Mr. Evins."

Beverley went on in a tone of the utmost candor.

"He *is* the very best-hearted boy in the world, and I like him ever so much. I can remember how we used to make sleds out of barrel staves when we were little, and slide down hill on the pine straw together."

"Ah? And did he always say, 'Miss Selden, your sled awaits,' to help you maintain your dignity of deportment on the way down the hill?"

"Oh, there was no need of being dignified then. There weren't any senators around, and 'Ginius was only two years older than I was."

There was a pause before the governor spoke again, and something in his tone made Miss Beverley look quickly over her shoulder at him. But his eyes were on the ceiling.

"And you like him because he isn't old?" he said.

"I — I'm not afraid of him, you know."

That made it worse.

"But you aren't *afraid* of *me*, either; and I'm a United States senator, and six months older than 'Brubber.'"

She thought she saw a way of escape.

"No, I'm not; but I might be if — if I didn't know you love Brubber almost as much as I do. That makes you like one of us — like home-folks" — and she turned from the window with a bewitching little air of comradeship. But Burwell still studied the ceiling and stroked his beard.

"Well," he said slowly, "I'm glad to be like home-folks to somebody; I haven't any home-folks myself, you know. Nobody on my plantation but negroes and the overseer and — dogs. And loving 'Brubber' is the way to keep you from being afraid of me, is it?"

She turned back to the window, and now there was a little tremor in her voice also.

"I don't believe I ever shall like anybody that don't love Brubber," she said; "and I know I shall never love anybody else as I love him."

Burwell stole a glance at her.

"Have you forgiven me yet for bringing him to meet me instead of you last Christmas?"

"Oh, yes; long ago. You see, you helped Eleanor and me to persuade him to come to Washington; and Major Watkins said you made the committee nominate him."

"So even a senator is useful to have around sometimes?"

She looked up mischievously.

"But you were only a governor, then."

"And a month or two younger," Burwell added, reflectively. "What should I have to do for 'Brubber' to make you forgive me for being old?"

His voice was dangerously low, but Beverley was off her guard for the moment, and answered impulsively:

"If you would take away the look that comes into his eyes when he thinks nobody sees him,

I'd forgive you for anything. I used to cry over that when I was nothing but a baby."

Burwell looked at her again. He saw that her head was bent over so that her forehead rested against the pane. There was a quick moisture in his eyes.

"You little —" but he checked himself. "I didn't think you took anything so seriously," he said.

She laughed a curious little laugh, and threw back her head.

"I don't believe I do take anything seriously except Brubber," she said; and again she turned to him with a smile that made the governor grip his lapel tighter. "Not senators, anyhow," she added.

Burwell felt himself going.

"I know one senator," he said very gently, "who would be content to be taken any sort of way, if only he might be taken."

But Beverley turned quickly back to the window.

"I know a senator who said he had a committee meeting in half an hour," she said.

Burwell instinctively reached for his watch; but he thrust it back unopened.

"The committee be — adjourned," he said. And now he bore down upon her.

"Beverley — "

She had started to beat a retreat; but Lewis came to her rescue.

"Marse Virginius Evins!" he shouted from the corridor; and as Virginius entered, she turned, with a stifled laugh, to greet him.

Mr. Evins's first appearance in the great world had evidently struck his aunt, Miss Anne Evins, as something of an occasion. His apparel so proclaimed it. It is doubtful if he had ever before submitted to so much discomfort from clothes. At sight of his friends, a look of relief spread over his countenance, but the smile of greeting was not one of his accomplishments.

"He'o, Bev," he said. "Mornin', Gov'nor Burwell."

The senator took up his hat and came forward to shake hands.

"Your servant, Mr. Evins," he said. "Glad

to see you in Washington, sir. But let me give you a warning. It isn't 'Bev' up here; it's 'Miss Selden.' No pine straw in Washington, you know."

"Huh? Pine straw?" Mr. Evins looked slowly around the room, then at Beverley, then at the governor. "No — pine — straw?"

"Yes, sir, no pine straw. Except when engaged in the agreeable pastime of sliding on pine straw, Miss Beverley finds it necessary to be dignified, and insists on being addressed as Miss Selden. Good morning, Miss Selden" — and he sought his committee.

Virginius turned to Beverley, and grinned.

"You been slidin' any up here, sho' 'nough, Bev?" he asked.

Miss Beverley grew emphatic.

"No, you goose. I'm grown now, and so are you. And, 'Ginius, you *mustn't* call me 'Bev' before people."

Mr. Evins looked a trifle injured.

"Why, Bev — Beverley, you told me to say 'Bev' las' Christmas," he said.

"Yes, but I wasn't eighteen then; and now

I'm grown, I've got a right to change my mind, like other women."

Mr. Evins measured the little figure slowly with his eyes.

"Well," he said, "you haven't grown many yards since Chris'mas, anyhow. I s'pose we *are* grown fo'ks, though," he added. "But I b'lieve I'd rather we weren't. I didn't have to wear any ole collar like this befo' I was grown, an' you didn't have to go off to any ole bo'din' school." He looked about him for a chair, and sat down heavily. "Don't you wish we *could* have a few more slides on the pine straw befo' we're grown up for good? Don't you remember that time I fell off my sled an' you come down lickety-split an' took me back o' the head an' knocked me senseless?"

"But you wouldn't like me to do *that* again, would you?"

Virginius chuckled.

"Well, when I came toe, you had my head in yo' lap an'—an' you were cryin'."

"I *wasn't* crying; and that was ages ago. I've forgotten all about it."

"Does seem like a long time ago."

Now it was Mr. Evins's tones that were growing dangerously sentimental, and he, too, was looking at the ceiling. Miss Beverley was having something of a forenoon.

"But you've forgot how I used to drop cuckle-burrs down your back, and the day I pushed you in the fish-pond."

She won the grin.

"No, I haven't forgot it," he said. "Aunt Anne got out the carriage-whip as soon as she saw me comin' over the hill in my wet clo'es; an' she said you were the worst child she ever saw, an' Miss Joanna ought to lock you up in the china closet."

"She did lock me up in the dark room, and I found a jar of brandy peaches in there, and ate so many they made me right silly."

Virginius chuckled again, but after a little his face grew preternaturally grave, and he heaved a sigh. He wanted to talk on about old times, and about his loneliness now that The Cedars was deserted, and to tell how he didn't seem to care about hunting as he used to, — and there

was no saying how he might have ended. But Miss Beverley had had quite enough of sentiment that morning, and called Miss Joanna to greet their guest. The rest of the day, she kept Virginius busy sight-seeing.

That night, Eleanor came from Virginia. She had written to Robert Underwood of her visit to The Cedars and of why Selden was in Washington. But Robert, she said, had replied with a cold refusal to coöperate in any way with Selden. Later, as if he had meanwhile been brooding over the matter, he had written again, commanding her to make choice, once for all, between her new-found friends and himself. To that letter she had not yet replied. Now, however, she thought it best — and so did Selden — to let Robert know she was in Washington, and why she had come. And so, the next morning, she and Beverley, sitting together, were startled by Lewis's voice from the corridor announcing "Marse Robert Underwood to see Miss Eleanor." Lewis himself looked into the room with a scared face, and Beverley, glancing

compassionately at Eleanor, retreated by the other door as Underwood entered.

Lewis offered to take Robert's hat and cloak, but Underwood dismissed him with an impatient gesture that sent him out of the room shaking his head in a way old negro servants use to express a sense of injury. Lewis had known Robert from his childhood. He had greeted him with a humble "Good mornin', Marse Robert," and had been rewarded with the cold announcement that Mr. Underwood wished to see his sister. The Selden negroes were not accustomed to such treatment from gentlefolk; yet Lewis knew that Robert Underwood was gently bred. So the old man, when he went back to his post, prayed in his heart that Selden might not return until Underwood should be gone.

CHAPTER VI

CHAPTER VI

"THE pride of the very devil himself!" One could not glance at Robert Underwood's face without feeling that the governor was right. He always put me in mind of the Spanish king who let himself be roasted rather than retreat from the fire. Tall and rather slender in stature, he seemed to look down even on men who were taller than himself. His whole manner and bearing, his sensitive lips, his slight hands — everything about him — warned you that he held himself apart from his fellows and desired no close companionship with any. There were, indeed, traces of dissipation in his face, but one would never infer conviviality from them. "Here,"

one said to one's self, "is the sort of man who would ask to be left alone if he felt himself about to die."

Eleanor was plainly startled when he entered.

"Robert!" she exclaimed uncertainly, and moved forward to meet him; but he did not offer even to take her hand.

"Yes, it is I," he said, quietly. "You did not expect to see me among your new-found friends, perhaps; but I have so far violated my own self-respect to see if nothing will arouse yours. I have come to offer you a last opportunity to withdraw from the position you have seen fit to take."

Eleanor sank dejectedly into her chair, and he went on, standing over her, and forcing himself to speak quietly.

"I do not wish to be harsh with you, Eleanor, and if you give up this madness I shall never remind you of it or reproach you with it. In anything else, you may have your way, as you always have had it; but in this matter, in which the honor of our family is

involved, I have a right, as the head of the family, to be obeyed."

Eleanor smiled wearily.

"Honor!" she said.

A darker look came into Underwood's face; but he went on in the same quiet tone.

"Yes, honor. I can hardly wonder that the word seems meaningless to you, since you are willing to make friends with a man who is so dead to its requirements that he refuses the satisfaction one gentleman has a right to demand of another. But while you are known to the world as my sister I must insist that you respect — at least outwardly — the requirements, not of honor merely, but of common decency."

"And is it inconsistent with the honor of our family to accept the aid of a man who can help us — who has helped us — to save our father's memory from disgrace?"

"We should have no need to defend our father's memory if he were alive. From the son of the man who first slandered him and then killed him we can accept no favors. What

madness could have induced you to go and beg this man's help in his own home, I cannot imagine. But of one thing you must be sure; and I say it not hastily, but deliberately. Unless you come with me now, and free me from the ignominy of your association with these people, we must part. You must choose to-day between them and me. The estate shall be divided, and you shall have your share at once.

"But Mr. Henry Selden is not guilty of his father's sin, Robert. His own life was ruined by it. He loved our father, and father loved him."

"Yes, he did love him," said Underwood; and he added, in a lower tone, as if to himself, "That was the first thing he ever robbed me of."

But Eleanor heard the words. She raised her eyes to his face, and looked at him in silence, at first wonderingly, then in a great surprise, and then with a dawning tenderness of pity.

"The first? But Margaret was not *your* sister, Robert. Oh, Robert! Then *you* loved Margaret? You, too, loved her?"

For an instant, Underwood's face was dreadful to see. His whole frame trembled. It was some moments before he spoke again; but when he did speak, his voice was merely a little lower than it was before.

"I have told you that you must choose between your new friends and me—choose to live either in their world or in mine. You must choose now, Eleanor."

Eleanor was crying, but she slowly rose and faced him.

"Robert," she said, "I have tried to do my duty, tried to love you, but you have never cared for me. I am trying to do my duty now. You are hard and cruel when you make me choose between it and you. See Mr. Selden, Robert. He does not feel toward you as you feel toward him. He has come to Washington only to help you."

"To help me!"

He clenched his hands, but once more he mastered himself with a sudden effort, and came back to her.

"Will you come?" he said.

"I — I cannot."

"Very well."

He turned to take up his hat and coat, and he did not look at her again.

"I have only one more word to say to you. If any one, hearing your name, should ask if you are my sister, answer no."

He was moving to the door when Selden, entering, stopped short at seeing him there. Both turned pale, and Selden drew aside to let the other pass. Underwood fixed his eyes on the quiet face before him, and paused, as if expecting Selden to address him. But Selden was silent, and the other walked slowly from the room. Eleanor, who had been standing with clasped hands and wide open, frightened eyes, sank into a chair and fell into a passionate sobbing.

The revelation that Robert, in that far-off time, out of which nothing but sorrow seemed to come, had loved his gentle step-sister, and that his pride had keep his heart closed for so many years to any healing sympathy, and that she herself had been torturing him every

time she spoke of Margaret or of Selden, had moved her deeply. It was some moments before she could rise and dry her eyes and turn to Selden, who was waiting in pain until she should recover from her disorder.

"Robert is very angry because you came to us?" he asked.

"Yes, he is very angry. Oh, Mr. Selden, was it wrong for me to come? It does seem so bold, so unwomanly, now that I have done it. But I could not think it right to live on always in such slavery to that dreadful past. And then — and then — there was the reason which I dare not tell you, even yet."

"No," he said, "it was not unwomanly, little Eleanor. It is because we men are only men, without the truer sense of right and wrong, the mercy, the gentleness, that makes women women — it is because of this that the world is so full of passion and despair. Our blind pride of manhood will not let us take the path to happiness that your women's hearts know how to find and are brave enough to follow. Robert will not be reconciled?"

"He has forbidden me to call him brother. He will sell Hill Top, and we must live apart. But pray, pray do not let this outcome of my visit to The Cedars make you unhappy, Mr. Selden. It was I who took the risk, and I knew what it was."

"And you will not end by hating me for bringing this estrangement between you and Robert?"

"Do not think me capable of such injustice. Indeed, I do not believe Robert ever really cared for me. I have found more tenderness and love under your roof than I have known for many years. I have gained more than I have lost, whatever the future may be."

"I think it is I who have gained the most," he said gravely.

She looked up quickly.

"Then you are glad you have come back into the world."

"I have learned, at least, what any man who lives apart from his fellows is in danger of forgetting — that no one can live in the past

without sin against the present and the future. Until you came, it was as if I saw only the shining of the distant stars, and not the nearer lights that show us work and duty. You have brought — a candle to an astrologer on his turret, little Eleanor."

"But that other light, that starlight — was it not sweeter, finer?"

Selden looked at her steadily for a moment, a curious smile on his lips; then he dropped his eyes.

"Perhaps," he said, "my eyes are no longer fit for any other. At any rate, when this task of ours is over, I shall climb back to my turret."

There was not the ordinary sureness in his tone. He quickly changed the subject and began to tell Eleanor of the committee, and the audience they were to have the next day. He questioned her closely as to her knowledge of her father's relations with the famous chief whose heirs and descendants were now trying to bring shame upon her and her brother; but he told her little concerning his own knowledge

of the matter. This talk led back to Robert, and the hatred which the Indians evidently felt for him; but of that, also, he gave no explanation. Eleanor, mindful of the discovery she had just made, spoke with unwonted tenderness of Robert, and finally she asked if Selden and he had ever been estranged before their families were.

"No," he said; "but Robert and I, though we were together as children and at the University, never seemed to understand each other very well, and when we left the University our lives were divided."

"And did you ever think," she asked timidly, after a little silence, "that Robert cared for Margaret?"

Selden turned a little pale, and looked at her in surprise. He hesitated before he answered.

"I thought once that he cared for her," he said. "But I am sure he never made his love known to her," he added, after another pause.

But Eleanor was equally sure that she had not misunderstood Robert's bitter smile when he said that his father's love was the first of which

Selden had robbed him. His terrible anger when she let him know that she had guessed his secret could mean nothing else than that he had loved Margaret in silence while she lived, and mourned her in silence after her death. The pride that had always kept him silent Eleanor could not understand, perhaps; but to the pity of it she was alive. Selden, too, was much moved when he learned from her how Robert had betrayed himself. But the knowledge did not help him to any way of approaching Robert, or of offering him the sympathy he had all his life so sternly avoided. When Beverley and Virginius came in, they found the two fallen into silence; and tears were still slowly gathering in Eleanor's eyes.

CHAPTER VII

CHAPTER VII

THE pity that now for the first time stirred in Eleanor's heart for the brother whom she had all her life failed to understand was for the pain of unrequited love which he had borne so long in silence. Only one who knew Robert Underwood better than any woman could, would know what cause for pity there was in the wound she herself had unwittingly inflicted when she let him know that his secret was revealed to her. To be misunderstood might be hard to such a man, as to another; but to be understood, and perhaps pitied, was infinitely harder. And had not Eleanor's eyes looked into his very heart? Might not Selden come to know?

On the plantations of the South, while slavery endured, there were types of men developed such as neither America nor any other country seems any longer to bring forth. For men were permitted there, as now they seldom are, anywhere in Christendom, to go on and be whatever they began to be in their cradles. A certain sameness is bred in us by the general uniformity of the conditions under which we live, and by our too full acquaintance with each other's lives. But when a hundred slaves did the bidding of one master, and every great plantation was a principality, a little despotism, there were Americans subject to influences now little known in America or elsewhere. The chief of these were power and solitude. Let the philosophical reader consider what these must have meant to men naturally of like souls to ours, and he may come to a better understanding of Henry Selden and Robert Underwood. He can understand neither of them unless he remembers that The Cedars and Hill Top were seats of nearly absolute power, and that hardly the castles of mediæval Germany

were remoter from the vast surges of modern life than those two plantation homes. To be powerful and yet much alone was the lot in life that fell to the sons of both these houses. Neither in his youth had ever been beaten upon and rounded to conformity by any constant contact and attrition of his fellows, or ever brought to feel himself engulfed in any swirling, streaming sea of human joys and pains and strifes such as we all must feel about as now.

But if to one that heritage of mastery and solitude had been a discipline in gentleness, and to the other a stamp of separateness from his kind, it was not wholly because the two were born unlike — the one to loving and the other to hating. No: I have seen too much of human living and dying, under too many skies, to hold that explanation of these two lives sufficient. What had turned these two men, born to the same outward circumstance, into two so different ways of facing life was, I am persuaded, an inequality of fortune, — nothing less, in truth, than the very greatest of all inequalities of fortune in this world; greater, by far, than if

one had been born to poverty, or halt, or blind, or deaf; greater, even, than if either had been born without that gift, compact of many, which we rightly set above all other birth-gifts, calling it simply "birth." In these things they were equals. But when they two had first looked forth on life with all that wondering expectancy which youth has, and only love or genius keeps, life had made to both the same great challenge — to both had beckoned with the selfsame woman's hand. And one had seen, the other never had seen, the love-light in her eyes.

Now, how men bear misfortune is, no doubt, the best test of their nobleness of soul; and I have seen in my time many men, in many causes, overthrown. But with all there is in us of greed, ambition, purpose, and the lesser hopes in life, there never comes, I think, to men of any nobleness whatsoever, another overthrow to be compared to that which one of these men had to bear. One only: for most will understand how Selden could win through suffering to peace, while the other

could not, save through forgetfulness or by some low cajolery of his heart. Nay, I doubt not, Selden himself could reach out farther — farther, and with a truer understanding than Eleanor's or any woman's quick and tearful pity could — across the gulf between him and his enemy.

That these two should come at last to try to untwist the tangle of their lives on the stage where the young Republic was grappling with the monster she had reared on her own breast was to both, no doubt, as if fate threw together its big and little perplexities. Old statesmen who had given all their years to compromise were passing from the scene, their hands thrown up in warning and despair. Reckless politicians were crowding eagerly to the front, ignorant of the great forces that should soon sweep them away, with their petty devices, to make room for the unmarked men, the true protagonists of the coming struggle, now silently gathering their strength and girding their loins. Yet these two were strangely unmindful of all that stir and expectancy about them.

The aged senator from South Carolina, who, as it happened, was the chairman of the committee which should sit upon the matter which had brought Selden to Washington, was now very near the end of his great career, and by far the most picturesque figure of all those about to quit the scene. Absorbed in the fateful issues of the time, and seeing with mournfully prophetic vision the dangers threatening the very life of the Republic, the old man found it hard to take thought of lesser things. But many years before, he and Senator Underwood had been friends, and it was by reason of this circumstance that Selden, notwithstanding the hurry of the closing days of the session, had been able to obtain an audience for himself and Eleanor. Robert had been heard already, and so had the spokesman of the Indians.

When Eleanor and Selden entered the committee room, the members were awaiting the chairman, and when he came they all rose until he should be seated. His step was feeble, but as he threw aside his cloak and turned his

gray eyes on the company with a quick, imperious scrutiny, there was nothing to suggest that his bodily weakness had dimmed his mental acuteness.

"Gentlemen," he said, with the swift, husky utterance that had grown characteristic, "I am somewhat unwell, and should be glad to get our business finished as quickly as possible. I understand that we are agreed on accepting the bill as it comes to us from the House, except for their rejection of the appropriation for the heirs of Pushmataha, indemnifying them for the loss of certain lands previous to the final treaty."

"Yes, sir," said a senator; "and Mr. Selden is here to be heard in opposition to the appropriation."

The chairman turned to Selden.

"I appear, sir," said Selden, "more particularly in opposition to the language of the clause, and the grounds on which the appropriation is demanded. They impute fraud and dishonor to an eminent public servant, at one time commissioner in residence among the

Southern tribes, and at the time of his death a member of the Senate."

"Yes, Senator Underwood." The chairman looked keenly at Selden. "And *you*, sir, wish to speak for *him?*"

"Yes, sir. But there is another who, with better right than mine, claims an audience of the committee."

Senator Gates, a hard-faced, large man, broke in.

"We have heard Mr. Robert Underwood, the senator's son."

"It is Senator Underwood's daughter of whom I speak," said Selden.

The chairman turned his eyes kindly to Eleanor, and himself rose to place a chair for her.

"Yes," he said, "I remember. We have promised Miss Underwood a hearing, and on my part it shall be a kindly one. I knew your father many years ago, my dear Miss Underwood,—before you were born, perhaps. Can you tell us anything of this matter which your brother has not told us already?"

"I fear I can tell very little of which the committee will care to take account, sir. I was a child when my father died."

"You have no record of his bargain with the Indians?"

"No, sir. I have heard that the record was destroyed when the office at Hill Top was burned. But I remember that once, just before my father left us for the last time, he spoke to me of the bargain and of Pushmataha, from whom he bought the land."

"Tell us what you can remember."

"He had taken me to walk with him in the deer park, sir, and he was telling me of the time when all that region was the home of the Indians. He told me of the war with them, and of Tecumseh and Weatherford and Pushmataha. Then he pointed out a tree, the tallest on the plantation, and said that he had once slept beneath it by the side of Pushmataha, and that the next day the Choctaws had taken up arms against the Creeks and the British. He and the chief had afterwards fought side by side in some of the battles that followed, and in one of them,

he said, Pushmataha had saved his life. Wandering bands of Choctaws frequently visited Hill Top while I was a child, and he told me that if I should ever be mistress there I must remember his friendship with the chief, and show all kindness to his people. He said he was going away, and might not return, and he wished me to know about Pushmataha before he left. That is all. But surely, sir, he would not have spoken so to me, a little child, concerning a man whom he had wronged. It was the very day before he was — before he died, sir."

"You never saw the chief?"

"No, sir; I was an infant when he came to Hill Top for the last time. But I know he came in friendship and not in anger; for this was his gift." She held out to the chairman an Indian ornament of gold. "He gave it to my mother, and she hung it about my neck."

The members of the committee examined the trinket curiously.

"I think you do well to cherish it," said the chairman; "but it is not such evidence as

"I think you do well to cherish it," said the chairman.

the courts of law would be likely to consider. Is there anything else?"

"Nothing, sir. I must leave the rest to Mr. Selden, who knows more than I do of my father's life." She turned to the door, and the committee, obeying the lead of the chairman, rose. But impulsively she turned back; and Selden saw in her eyes, looking up into the gaunt face of the aged statesman, the same brave look which he had first seen when she came down the stairway that night at The Cedars. "Oh, sir," she said, "you will be wise enough to find the truth. Much, much suffering has come of this charge already, and if it be not disproved two more lives will be darkened by it. I am told that you, too, have a daughter whom you tenderly love. Think how she might have to suffer if in the years to come your fame, your honor, should be blackened by such a charge as this. You will not wish to believe of my father what you would not have her believe of you?"

She was speaking to one who, however bitterly in these later years his public career

has been criticised, bore a name so spotless that even to this day no partisan rancor has ever dared to cast a stain upon it. But the old man's head was bowed for a moment before he spoke.

"No, my child," he answered mildly, "we who have ourselves been tried and tempted would believe no more of evil than we must."

Eleanor left the room and joined Miss Joanna and Beverley, who, with Burwell and Virginius, were awaiting her in another part of the Capitol. The chairman turned to Selden.

"Can you throw any light on this curious business, Mr. Selden?"

"I trust, sir, that I can. It was only to avert this wrong to a good man's memory that I came to Washington. But if I am to speak more freely than I did in the open House, I must throw myself on the generosity of the committee, for I shall have to speak of things that are not for the public ear, and what I shall tell, although the story is of a time long past, might bring humiliation

upon one now living if it were told in public." He paused, and the chairman bowed.

"It so happened, gentlemen, that in my boyhood and youth I was with Senator Underwood much. His family and mine had lived on neighboring estates in Virginia, and when my father took his slaves to the Black Belt and became a cotton planter he did so at Senator Underwood's instance, and built his home near Hill Top. For some years, the two plantations were like outposts of civilization, for the lands were but recently cleared of the Indians, and most of the white population was made up of small farmers and rough pioneers. The families were very intimate, and Senator Underwood and my father were fast friends until they were estranged by politcial differences.

"Touching the purchase of Senator Underwood's lands from Pushmataha, I can speak with assurance. I have heard them speak of it together in language of friendly reminiscence."

"That is testimony of importance," said the chairman.

"More than that, sir, I was a guest at Hill Top when Pushmataha made the visit of which Miss Underwood has spoken. The chief had set out on his famous journey to Washington, and had come by Hill Top on his way. I was present when he took his last leave of his old friend and comrade. Grasping Senator Underwood's hand, he declared that if the White Father at Washington should prove to be such a man and such a friend as the white brother whom he had seen so often tested, then he would know that Tecumseh was wrong when he said that friendship with white men was treason to red men.

"As you know, sir, it was the chief's last journey. Here in Washington, he fell ill and died; here he was buried, in his uniform of an American officer, and the 'big guns' were fired over his grave. Who can doubt that if he had lived he would have been the first to deny this charge of fraud and deceit against the man who had eaten his bread, whose bread he had eaten, — the man in whose friendship he had died?"

Gates's harsh voice broke in again: —

"This is all very well, Mr. Selden, but is it not true that this charge was made in some form only a few years after the death of Pushmataha, — and before Senator Underwood's death? It is also true, and was made very plain to this committee, that to-day the Indians entertain for Mr. Robert Underwood a feeling quite different from that which they would naturally entertain for the son of their great war chief's best friend. Now, I know the nature of these creatures. They do not forget their friends or their enemies. If my recollection is correct, your own position in this matter is very different from your distinguished father's. I understand that he advocated the claims of the redskins somewhat warmly in his time; that in fact he became the instrument of their revenge."

There was no member of the committee who did not know what Gates had in mind. All of them were familiar with Governor Selden's career. Some of them had been associated with him in the Senate. Nevertheless, wondering as they doubtless did at the stand his son had

taken, none had yet thought fit to speak of it. Selden bowed his head a moment in thought, and then, lifting his eyes to the chairman's, he said slowly: —

"I had hoped, sir, that I might escape the mention of certain painful incidents connected with this charge. I trust, however, that what is spoken here is spoken as among gentlemen."

"I also trust," said the chairman, "that the members of the committee will know how to guard the knowledge which may come to them in the course of such an investigation."

"And does it seem to you necessary, gentlemen, that I explain why the Indians brought this charge, and the unfortunate share my father had in prosecuting it?" Selden went on.

"I think it would help us to a clearer understanding of the matter, Mr. Selden," said the chairman.

"Then, sir, I must rely on the honor of the committee.

"When Pushmataha came to Hill Top for the last time, his nephew was in his train. The eyes of the young savage fell upon a fair young girl,

the daughter of Senator Underwood's second wife, and he carried back to his forest home the vision of her grace and beauty. He grew to manhood with her image in his soul, and a few years after the death of the old chief he came again to Hill Top with the simple thought that the friend of his people would not frown upon his suit. Senator Underwood was not at Hill Top when he came, but until the young man made known his errand he was hospitably entertained. Soon, however, finding an opportunity, he revealed his passion after the wild manner of his race, and in a moment the traditional friendship between the Indians and the family at Hill Top was destroyed. A son of the house, being of a somewhat impetuous and haughty nature, thought the proposal insulting. The young chief died by his hand."

Gates had been listening intently.

"One moment!" he said. "This 'son of the house'? Senator Underwood had but one son, I believe."

"That has no bearing on our present inquiry, sir," said Selden. "The Indians, mourn-

ing the young chief's death, and bitterly resenting the contumely he and his followers had endured, then for the first time brought forward this charge against Senator Underwood. By an evil chance, it was just at this time also that certain differences on public questions had strained to the breaking the long friendship between Senator Underwood and my father. To my father they came for redress. He took up their cause. The remonstrances of Senator Underwood, himself ignorant of the true reason for the attack, were naturally warm. The rest, perhaps, you know. Senator Underwood atoned with his life for the only breach of hospitality his house had ever known."

He paused, and then went on again, speaking very gently.

"There, gentlemen, my story ought to end. But the sad business did not end there. That deed of hasty anger at Hill Top — of which I myself am the sole living witness — has multiplied its evil consequences. In my father's house, the blight fell upon my mother, who

was stretched on a bed of pain. The shock of learning that my father had slain his life-long friend in violent combat caused her death. At Hill Top, the blight fell on the young girl whose innocent beauty had been the cause of all that happened. By reason of the estrangements which sprang from this quarrel, her life's hope was destroyed, her heart was broken; in a few short years she sank into the grave. She who pleaded with you a moment since is herself the marvellous image of the gentleness thus rudely crushed. She prays you, gentlemen, and I, too, pray you, consider if it be necessary to sacrifice new victims to right so old a wrong. We pray you pause ere you transmit to another generation this legacy of suffering and hate."

For some moments no one spoke. The chairman suddenly rose to his feet.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I think we have heard enough to enable us to reach a conclusion."

The committee quickly rose, and all but

the chairman left the room. The old man turned kindly to Selden.

"Mr. Selden," he said, "we are much indebted to you for the light you have thrown on this strange business. You will hear of our decision at once." Selden was looking away absently; he only bowed mechanically. But suddenly he felt the chairman's hand on his shoulder, and that swift, nervous voice, grown strangely gentle, was whispering in his ear: "I think it is not the dead, my friend, but the living, who have suffered most from these estrangements. May God grant some atonement in the future."

The old man left the room, but Selden did not look up. He was standing, as he so often stood, his head turned aside, his eyes on the floor.

Eager voices interrupted his revery. It was Burwell and little Beverley, come to see if the audience was over. But when they heard that the committee would at once report to the Senate, they hurried away to hear the report, and Selden was again alone.

But not for long. In a few minutes, Burwell came back again to say that the old senator from South Carolina had just reported the bill back to the Senate, and the Senate had passed it, just as it came from the House.

"Go and tell the children, John," said Selden. And when Burwell left him, his eyes once more sought the floor. "Thank God," he murmured to himself, "I shall not have to bear the pleading of that child's eyes again. 'Atonement'? What atonement could the old man mean?" He turned, and Eleanor, her face aglow with happiness, her hands outstretched like a child's, was standing in the doorway.

"You have heard?" he said.

She came to him and impulsively took his hand in both her own.

"Yes, they have told me," she said, "and I have come to thank you — to thank you for this and for all that you have done for me. You do not yet know what you have done."

"Well," he said, smiling, "I seem to have brought the sunlight back into your eyes, little Eleanor, and that is enough."

"And may I not hope that your own life will be brighter for your descent into the world?"

"Perhaps it was an ascent, after all," he said.

"Then I pray that you may climb on to happiness — to happiness such as you have brought to me."

Selden turned away. His face was flushed, his eyes strangely brilliant.

'Atonement'! Could the old man have meant — ?

But Eleanor went on.

"I could not tell you all until the fear of this disgrace had passed away; for I, too, am proud, and — and — it was not for my happiness only that you were fighting, sir. It was for mine, and Fitzhugh's also."

"For Fitzhugh's?" He looked back at her quickly, but he did not yet understand.

"I promised Fitzhugh in Virginia that I would be his wife if our name should be saved from this dishonor."

For an instant Selden stared into vacancy;

then the brilliancy passed from his eyes, the unwonted color from his cheeks. He recovered himself with a little start, like one awaking from a sleep.

"Back to my turret!" he said, under his breath, and the slow smile came back into his face. "Why, it's like a story in a story book!" he said aloud. "And I never guessed it." He took her hand. "Fitzhugh is worthy of your love, little Eleanor, and for his sake, no less than yours, I am glad we won our fight. And to think that he, too, had a personal interest in the appropriation bill for the Indians!"

And now the others entered, and with them several who had aided him and Burwell. "Why, John," he called out to Burwell, "see what a simpleton I am. Here have I been winning Fitzhugh a wife from an appropriation committee, and I didn't know it. Well, it's a good thing I shan't have to pose much longer as a politician. I was on the point of forgetting that I was a congressman." And he took up his hat.

But Burwell stopped him.

"Henry," he said gravely, "don't go back to the House to-day." Selden paused, and looked at his friend inquiringly. "It seems that some member of the committee — Gates, I suppose — has been talking about the hearing, and" — he glanced at Eleanor — "Mr. Robert Underwood — "

"What of Robert?" said Eleanor. "He cannot be displeased at the committee's report."

"He is incensed at something Henry told the committee."

Selden laid down his hat.

"Some one has told him?"

"Yes."

"Then I have blundered, after all."

Eleanor looked at Selden with frightened eyes. A moment more, and a swift step was heard in the corridor, and Underwood, his face seamed with anger, his eyes aflame, had entered the room. He stopped, looked slowly from one to another of the company, and then advanced to Selden.

"I have sought you, sir, throughout the Capitol," he said. "It is needless to say that I come to thank you for defending my father's honor—by bringing dishonor upon his son."

Selden was silent, looking down upon the floor.

"Your confederate, Gates, has revealed the method by which you accomplished your purpose, and it has spread through the Capitol that I myself could long ago have defeated this bill if I had not chosen to see my father branded a thief rather than myself discovered a murderer; if I had not chosen to conceal the boyish folly which you alone could reveal at the expense of my father's memory — my father's memory, which but for the slander your father was the first to take up would have needed no defence."

Selden raised his head.

"Senator Gates is not my confederate, Robert, and his statement is a disgraceful violation of confidence."

"Nevertheless, you do not deny its truth, and you cannot escape the responsibility for

your own act. Our score is a long one, Henry Selden, but there is a way to wipe it out at once."

Deliberately, he drew a heavy glove from his breast and struck Selden across the face. Burwell leaped forward angrily, but Selden waved him back. He was pale as death, but there was no anger in his eyes.

"No, not that way, Robert," he said, quietly, — "not that way."

CHAPTER VIII

CHAPTER VIII

MARCH in the Black Belt! How little the reader, used, perhaps, to find in March a culmination of all things disagreeable in winter, with no alleviation of spring, can fancy what March in the Black Belt is like! February there is the month of promises and first beginnings. April and May partake of the summer's fierceness. March, elsewhere dreaded, is there nothing more or less than spring itself — and such a spring as I believe no other region knows.

The winter, mild in reality, has been, nevertheless, tremendous in suggestion by reason of the abundant life it stopped in forest and in field. The single snowstorm which it brought

was more impressive than many snows where snows are common. Now, with delirious swiftness, flowers and leaves and warmth return. It is like the sudden blooming of girlhood into womanhood — another transition which is likewise marvellously swift in that same region — and has like effects. For in no other clime does nature at this season take men's spirits with so lavish a caress. Here is no slow approach, no shaded cordiality, no cautious, spinster-like advances; no, nor any maiden coyness. It is a frank beguilement, an utter and outright surrender. It is the very Juliet of springtides.

And soul and body yield to that impetuous blandishment. It is a time of lying on the hillsides, when "fighting violets" will pass for strenuous occupation; a time of forgetting duty, work, ambitions, in the mere languorous delight of breathing that soft air, of gazing upward to those mild, blue-white heavens. Above all, it is a time of dreaming love dreams, of planning endless happiness, of speaking in low tones, of infinite trust and

infinite tenderness. Only, now and then, for an hour perhaps, a thunderstorm breaks in upon the dreaming.

At The Cedars, the Christmas party was reunited, and all the shadows that had darkened the earlier gathering seemed to have passed away. Eleanor, then a trembling guest, was now taken finally into the lives of all in the household. Even Lewis had well-nigh overcome his forebodings. Now that his master had passed through the vaguely dreaded ordeal, what was there to fear?

In fact, the only really gloomy face that appeared at The Cedars was the face of Virginius Evins. It wore a look of perplexity whenever he came, and he was actually growing thin and pale. One bright morning, as he came riding slowly up the avenue, Tena, who watched him from the doorway, broke into comment on his altered state.

"Well, ef he doan' show his mis'ry!" she exclaimed. "Name er Gord, huccome he doan' up en' tell 'er 'bout it? I b'lieve he'd light out en' run erway ef he started to tell 'er en' she

laughed at 'im. En' now, heah he come, fo' dey th'ough eatin' breakfus'! 'Twix' him an' Marse John Burwell, Miss Bev'ley doan' hardly git time to eat en' sleep."

Virginius rode up to the doorway, gave the bridle to a little darky, and heavily mounted the steps.

"Good mornin', Marse 'Ginius," said Tena. "Jes' hev' a seat, sir. Miss Bev'ley be out toreckly. Dey ain' quite th'ough breakfus' yit, sir. Dey late dis mornin', 'cause Marse Fitzhugh come home las' night, en' dey set up talkin' tell neah 'bout twelve o'clock."

"It's not Miss Bev'ley I want to see this mornin'," said Virginius. "It's Mr. Selden. Aunt Tena," he added, in a lower tone, "is — is Gov'nor Burwell gone home yet?"

Tena grinned.

"Naw, sir; but I heah tell he gwine 'way ter-morrow. Miss El'nor, she gwine 'way ter-morrow, too. I 'speck she gwine back to her cousins in Virginia, sir, to git ready fer de wed-din'."

"Will Miss Joanna an' Miss Bev'ley

an' Mr. Selden all of 'em go up to the weddin'?"

"Yes, sir; en' I heahed Marse Hinry say he gwine on to Eurup' after dat, sir. You see, sir, Marse Fitzhugh, he done resign his place in de yarmy, now he en' Miss El'nor gwine git married, en' both uv 'em comin' back heah to De Cedars to live. I 'speck he'll hang his swo'd up dyah on de wall den, 'longside o' dem two swo'ds er ole marster's."

Virginius glanced up at the swords.

"Why," he exclaimed, "there's a picture of ole Gov'nor Selden! I never saw that before."

"Yes, sir. Marse Fitzhugh brung it wid him f'um New York, en' dey hung it up dyah las' night. Hit sut'ney do look lak' ole marster — dat is, lak' he use to look after ole mist'iss died. His mouf was sot jes' lak' dat, en' he 'us frownin' mos' all de time. Dat's ole mist'iss on de lef' han' side, sir, en dis'n 's Miss Marg'ret."

Virginius was not given to sentimental reflections, but the grim visage of the old governor, established thus between the portraits

of his wife and Margaret Hilliard, could not fail to set any one thinking who knew the story which Selden had told to the committee in Washington; and the story, excepting Robert's part in it, was known to the whole Black Belt. Even Robert's part in it had been vaguely rumored in the neighborhood since the Seldens' return, and also the fact of Selden's meeting with Robert, and Robert's challenge. It was a natural association of ideas that made Virginius ask, when he turned again to Tena, whether Selden had any idea of standing for another term in Congress.

"I doan' know 'bout dat, sir," she replied. "I heahed Miss Bev'ley talkin' to Marse John Burwell 'bout dat ve'y thing, sir, en' he say dey's some trouble 'count o' fo'ks sayin' Marse Hinry skeered to fight Marse Robert Underwood up dyah in Washin'ton. But he say he think he kin git de convention to normernate 'im ergin. D'y' ever heah sich foolishness? Marse Hinry ain' skeered to fight nobody, but when ole mist'iss wus dyin' he promust her he nuver would fight nobody. En' 'cose

he cyarn' fight Marse Robert, now Miss El'nor en' our Marse Fitzhugh done made up to git married."

Further discussion of the matter was interrupted by the entrance of Selden himself. He was dressed for riding. When he saw Virginius, he told him that Beverley would be out directly; he himself had left the others at breakfast in order to ride down to the lower field where the "hands" were at work.

Virginius was confused, but resolute.

"I — I don't want to see Miss Bev'ley," he said. "That is, I want to see you, sir." Whereupon Selden asked the pleasure of his company on the ride, and they went out, leaving Tena grinning.

"Dyah now!" she said. "He gwine ax Marse Hinry fer Miss Bev'ley. Better fin' out whut she think 'bout it fus'."

The grin on Tena's face was only broadened when she heard the voices of Eleanor and Fitzhugh, and turned to see them entering the hall together. But Tena did not wait. Eleanor and

Fitzhugh were to be left alone whenever they could be.

They passed through the hall to the porch, and looked out upon the morning a little while in silence.

"And to think," said the young man, "that only one of these days is ours. Thank goodness, there'll be no general orders to keep me away from you the next time you come to The Cedars."

Eleanor's dark riding-habit, as she leaned against one of the great pillars of the porch, enhanced the frailty of her figure and the delicate pallor of her face. She met his tender gaze a little timidly.

"I fear I shall be counted a poor sort of patriot if I deprive the country of your services," she said.

"Oh, I'm going to be such a model planter that the country won't lose by the exchange. The very cedars shall cease to be sombre when we come back. And to think, dear, that we shall be together always, always — in spite of all that stood between us. Dear old Henry!

It was he who gave us our happiness. It was he who gave us to each other."

"And he himself — shall we not destroy the calm in which he has lived so many years? But then, I cannot think of him as happy after the fashion of others. He seems to me so far above other men, so free from sin and weakness, that he cannot even feel the need of happiness like ours. Isn't it glorious to rule one's passions as he does! I could almost have worshipped him that day in Washington, when Robert came."

"I think I have worshipped him all my life. You did not see your brother after that?"

"No; but I know he is at Hill Top now, making ready to sell the estate. I wrote to him, but he did not answer."

Her head was drooping. He stooped and kissed her forehead, and then cried out gayly that it was time for their ride — the last ride he should ever have with Miss Eleanor Underwood. She went slowly upstairs to fetch her hat, and he to the stables to order the horses.

The next instalment of the breakfast party consisted of a large and animated gentleman, and a small but no less animated young lady. They were engaged in a heated debate. The gentleman, from his manner, and especially from the twinkle in his eye, had evidently gained a strategic advantage over his adversary; but she showed no disposition to concede her defeat.

Burwell was speaking with mock humility.

"Well, it's pretty hard on a man who has always stood for purity in politics. If I understand the situation, there's no way to make my calling and election sure without tampering with the politics of this district. If I heard you correctly behind that rose-bush before breakfast, you will say 'aye' when my name's called only in case the convention at Belview said 'aye' yesterday when Major Watkins proposed Henry's name for Congress."

"No, I didn't say that," said Beverley. "All I said was, that I wouldn't talk to you about it again until you made the convention nominate Brubber."

"And do you not see, my dear Miss Selden, that you are asking me to trifle with the sovereign electorate of this district? Henry will never accept that nomination; he will be abroad a year at the least."

"But I won't have it look as if he couldn't stay in Congress if he would — after all the mean things those Raveneis and the rest of them have been saying. They *shall* nominate him again."

"'By the eternal!' Old Hickory himself couldn't have said it any better. Well, I can only pray that they have done your will. And really, I did want them to offer it to him, without regard to any — er — personal considerations."

"Then suppose we forget all about the — er — personal considerations. I shouldn't like to be investigated for bribing senators."

Burwell was looking down the avenue.

"I ought to know my fate pretty soon; in fact, I'm expecting the major's messenger every minute. The convention should have settled the matter last night, and he promised to send

a man on horseback to let me know. I can't stand the suspense much longer."

The confidence in his eyes belied his words; but Beverley did not notice it. She had been listening intently.

"I hear a horse's gallop now," she cried.

Burwell put his hand to his heart.

"The messenger! And my fate is in his message! Ah, suppose I have failed — suppose the major and I have failed, Beverley. Must I wait two years for another convention? You know you don't like *old* senators. Why not rebuke the convention, and say 'aye' even if it did say 'no'?"

"Oh, that would be trifling with the sovereign electorate of the district."

A negro on horseback had indeed turned into the gateway, and now came slowly up the avenue, his horse showing signs of hard riding. When he reached the steps he held up a note to Burwell, who seized it, made as if to open it, and then, with an air of terrified indecision, crushed it in his hand and began to pace up and down the porch.

Beverley tried to look demure and patient, but her curiosity and her real concern about the nomination were too much for her.

"Please open it," she said.

He turned upon her with dramatic gloom.

"No," he said solemnly, "let us make our bargain clear. Let me at least know that I have had one chance of happiness, even though it fail me. Do you promise to say 'aye' to the question I shall ask you if the convention said 'aye' to Henry's name? Will you obey the voice of the people?"

She looked at him with laughing eyes, but not a muscle of his face twitched, and she dropped her head.

"Do you promise?" he said.

"Well, I suppose I'm a Whig. Oh, read it, please."

He held out the missive, and she tore it open and began to read it aloud.

"'Major Watkins presents his compliments to Governor Burwell, and begs to inform him that on the first ballot the convention renominated the Honorable Henry Selden for Con-

gress.' Oh, I'm so glad! But what is this he adds? 'This written statement of the fact is sent in obedience to Governor Burwell's verbal request, made last night after the convention had acted. A committee will wait on Mr. Selden to inform him of his nomination.' Why, what does he mean by your 'verbal request'? And he says it was made last night, after the convention had acted."

Governor Burwell's eyes indicated that there was a grin somewhere beneath his beard. He had been caught in his own little trap, and when Beverley, with a dawning intelligence of his perfidy, asked him if he had seen Major Watkins the night before, he promptly admitted that it looked as if he had.

"But he was in Belview at the convention."

"Yes."

"And you were here at The Cedars."

"Until twelve o'clock, yes. But at two-thirty this morning I very rudely interrupted a little game of cards in the major's apartments at the hotel in Belview."

It is frequently the blunders of men that

save them with the other sex — when they know how to follow up a blunder with a change of tactics. The little lady's voice grew softer than Burwell had ever heard it, and a look came into her eyes that she had never let him see there before.

"Then — then you rode all night to see if Brubber was nominated?" she said. But the next instant her eyes were bright with a mock indignation. "Why, you knew what the convention had done when we were walking before breakfast. I don't call that fair, sir."

Burwell was a good tactician.

"No, it wasn't fair," he said. "But who would not load the dice if he threw for his love? Ah, I would have ridden through fire and water to win a game like that. And have I not won? Tell me — tell me I have won."

But she did not seem to hear his pleading. She turned and went into the hall, walked slowly to the stairs, and mounted two or three steps, and she was not looking at the governor at all. He followed her, and caught her hand when she laid it on the

banister. She stopped, but she did not yet look at him, or speak. Slowly he raised the little hand to his lips, and held it there while he waited.

When she spoke, her voice was trembling. "You — won't — ask me — to love you — any better — than — I do — Brubber?"

"I will be content with whatever measure of love your little heart vouchsafes me, Beverley."

A moment more they stood thus. Suddenly, she snatched away her hand, turned, laughing through her tears, kissed his forehead, darted up the stairs, and disappeared. The governor made a wild effort to leap over the banisters and follow her, then turned and began to pace the floor, his eyes fairly dancing with his happiness.

"Old Henry must know it as soon as he comes back!" he cried, and seating himself at a table he dashed off a line to his friend.

While he wrote, Fitzhugh reëntered the hall.

"Aha! Captain," cried the governor, "you

shan't be the only man riding on air this morning. We shall be in the same boat — I mean on the same horse."

"Sorry for the horse, Governor; but I don't understand. Has that little rascal — "

The governor nodded, and Fitzhugh held out his hand.

"I congratulate you, Governor, with all my heart. It will be a glorious ride for us all."

Beverley and Eleanor were coming downstairs. Fitzhugh looked up smilingly at his sister.

"Has Governor Burwell told you?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, he has told me. He began to brag about it as soon as I came in."

"I was just determined he should win after all those horrid stories about what happened in Washington."

Fitzhugh turned in some bewilderment to Burwell.

"Why, Governor, has somebody been slandering you?"

Beverley, too, turned upon the governor.

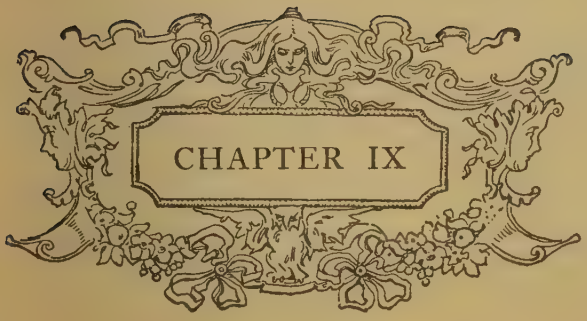
"Why, you haven't been telling *that*, have you? I meant that Brubber had won. The convention has renominated him for Congress."

But Eleanor, laughing, came to Burwell's rescue.

"Don't look so penitent, Governor Burwell," she said. "Beverley hasn't kept the secret any better than you have."

"The horses are waiting," said Fitzhugh. "I think a gallop is the only way for us to express ourselves this morning." And they rode forth in a burst of merriment.

CHAPTER IX



IT was nearly midday before any of the riding party returned. Miss Joanna had driven over to see Miss Anne Evins, who was ailing, and the house was deserted, except for the servants, when Selden and Virginius came back from the lower field. Before they dismounted, Selden glanced to the westward and remarked that a thunder cloud was gathering in that quarter. They had been but a few moments in the house when the sky began to darken, and the birds to fly lower in their passages from cedar to cedar.

Virginius gave little heed to the threatening storm. The boy's face was dignified with a look of care and suffering, and Selden spoke to

him very kindly on the subject they had been discussing during their ride.

"I promise you," he said, "that when the time comes it shall all rest with Beverley herself, Virginius. None of us would oppose her choice — certainly not if it fell on you, my boy, But she is scarcely more than a child as yet. She is only eighteen, and you yourself are only twenty. It will be several years before either of you should think of marriage."

"Yes, sir, I know," said Virginius. "But you see, sir, she won't be at The Cedars all the time now. Until she went away to Virginia, I didn't know myself how I felt about her, but now, if I thought she was goin' 'way to stay, I don't b'lieve I'd care 'bout huntin' or anything else. I know I'm clumsy an' red-headed, sir, an' how I've wasted my time, but I never did anything *mean* in my life. I'm goin' to the University — I've made up my mind about that — an' if she'd promise to wait for me, I b'lieve I could do 'most anything — I b'lieve I could learn Latin, Mr. Selden."

Selden smiled.

"You have never spoken to her?"

"I've tried to, sir. That's why I went to Washin'ton. Somehow, I had a notion 'twould be easier there. But I never did. I b'lieve she knows, though, and makes fun of me jus' to keep me from sayin' what I want to say. I always meant to speak to you about it first, sir, anyhow."

"Well, perhaps there's no hurry. Governor Burwell has never spoken to me about her, and your fears may be groundless." He laid his gloves on the table, and his eyes fell on Burwell's note. "Why, this is for me. Will you pardon me?" He read the first line, which informed him of his renomination, and a slight frown came over his forehead. "John knows I'm going abroad," he said. But when he read that Burwell himself had been elected to "a place infinitely preferable to the presidency," he raised his eyes quickly to Virginius, who was gazing moodily out of the doorway down the darkening avenue, and an expression of pity fell from his lips. He stood for a moment thoughtfully fingering

the note. Virginius turned and renewed his plea.

"Mr. Selden, I'm 'fraid to wait. It'll take me at least fo' years to get through the University, and by that time she'll be twenty-two. There'll be so many men comin' to see her in fo' years, an' ev'ry blessed one of 'em will be in love with her. They'll be han'somer an' smarter than I am, I know — but they won't love her any better, sir. Mayn't I speak to her now, sir? I can't tell you how I feel, but I'd rather die to-day than lose her, Mr. Selden."

"I think I know how you feel, Virginius. I believe you when you say you would die for her. But there is something you can do for her sake that is harder than dying."

Virginius was frowning down upon the floor, and absently striking his boots with his riding-whip.

"There can't be anything too hard for me to do for her," he said.

"If you thought that her happiness required it, could you go out of her life, and never let

her know how you have loved her? Could you love her well enough to give her up — forever?"

The boy looked up quickly into Selden's eyes, and read something there that made him turn pale and tremble. The whip fell from his hand.

"Give her up?" he faltered. "Give her up — forever?"

Selden's voice was like a woman's, and his eyes were moist.

"Could you be brave enough for that?" he said. "Men die for many things, Virginius; for fame, for pride, sometimes for hate. Dying is not the hardest or the bravest thing. If our little Beverley loved another, a man worthy of her love, who loved her truly and faithfully, could you bear, for her sake, to see him take his place always at her side, — to hide your own love, that her happiness might not be marred by any thought of the anguish you endured?"

The boy was dazed.

"I — I'd rather die, Mr. Selden," he said.

"Yes, but that would not be for her sake, Virginius. Think. Could you not go on living that way — for her sake — until at last her happiness became your own? Could you not do this — for little Beverley?"

There was a long pause. Selden, leaning forward, looked pityingly into the boy's rough face, now white with anguish. At length, it settled into the lines of resolve. Virginius raised his head.

"Yes, sir," he said, "I think I could do anything for her."

"My boy, I think you are brave and good and honest, and I believe that suffering will never turn to bitterness in your heart. It is hard for me to tell you what I have learned from this note. Beverley has chosen another mate, Virginius. Your love for her must bear the supreme test — the test of renunciation. An honorable man loves her, and has won her love."

Virginius seemed to choke for a moment.

"Gov'nor Burwell?" he asked.

"Yes, she is engaged to Governor Burwell."

For a moment the boy gazed straight in front of him. Then he turned and groped for his hat, as if he were blinded. Without, the cedars were waving in the wind; the hall was grown quite dark.

Selden stepped quickly across to Virginius and laid his hand on his arm.

"Stop, Virginius," he said. "Years ago, I had to bear what you are bearing now. Sometimes, I almost think that love is only sent to chasten us, for life is short, and death must come so soon, and bitter—ah, more bitter far than death, Virginius — is love's defeat. And yet, believe me, even from the grave of a buried love a good and noble life — almost a happy life — may grow, if one has loved aright. Surely you will not harden your heart against the world — against him — against her. She cannot know the pain you bear. If she should know, think how her eyes would fill with tears for you — her playmate."

"She shan't never know, sir," said the boy, huskily.

"Ah, that is braver than dying! Come

with me to Europe, Virginius. Let us seek in other lands, in strange cities, in the great world, some cure for the hurts which we have taken here in the Black Belt."

Virginius was moving to the door.

"Thankie, Mr. Selden," he said. "I'll go anywhere to keep from seein' her, sir. Good-by, sir."

But Selden tried to detain him.

"Stay till the storm has passed. The rain will come in a moment. Look how dark it is."

"Thankie, sir; but—they might come back. Oh, I must go!" His voice broke in a sob, and he rushed out.

The big, slow raindrops had begun to fall like the first shots on the skirmish line before a battle. An instant later, there was a flash and a tremendous crack and roar of thunder, and then Selden could hear the hoof-beats of the boy's horse galloping madly away.

The storm grew every moment fiercer. Selden stood in the doorway gazing into it, his own face drawn with pain; for it had been a trying

scene. When he came back into the hall, he dropped wearily into a chair.

"Yes," he said to himself, "the boy shall come with me to Europe. If we do not find happiness there, we shall know, at least, that we have left it behind us here. For surely the curse has passed away from this house at last."

But the swelling uproar without bred in him an unwonted restlessness. He rose and paced the floor. Not one of all the eyes at The Cedars, lovingly as they had followed him to note if any change had been wrought in him by absence and by the ordeal at Washington, had found any sign of a departure from the settled calm in which he had lived before Eleanor came. Miss Joanna, who had never quite yielded to the contention of Governor Burwell that some immersion in great affairs would bring forgetfulness and new interests, had indeed rejoiced to find no change; for she had known better than Burwell or any other the beauty and sweetness of his life at The Cedars. The simplicity and tranquillity of her own nature had enabled her to find in his acceptance of peace a

thing satisfactory and right, while the others had longed to see his exceptional endowments exercised in such strivings as the world is wont to watch and to applaud. For her, it was enough that every slave on the plantation loved him; that the neighbors honored him, though they wondered at him; that Beverley and Fitzhugh idolized him. Lewis, too, was glad that his master had not changed. Burwell and little Beverley felt themselves defeated, and accepted their defeat. No one — not even Eleanor, who had the best reason — perceived how deeply he had been stirred.

Nevertheless, if any of those who loved him had seen his face at this moment, they would have trembled. There are natures, easily stirred, which respond with dramatic distinctness to every provocation, whether it be to love or anger or generosity or grief, and then as swiftly resume their ordinary state. Each several outward incident is reflected in its corresponding deed or word. The response is immediate, appropriate, logical. Other and rarer natures there are, however, on which the outer forces act not

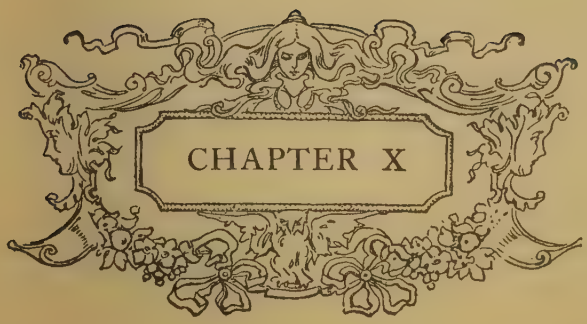
severally, but all together; not immediately, but with cumulative effect. Countless slight vexations, like the itching shirt of Ulysses, wear away the will's resistance. Slow-gathered waters fill to the full the reservoir of passion. When such a nature breaks the bounds it sets itself, the effect is like a tidal wave, heaved up by forces distant and unseen, sweeping out of a calm ocean upon peaceful shores.

I think that there had always been such tides in Selden, but hitherto he had curbed and ruled them. How strong they were, he alone could know. To foresee them, to prepare for them, to battle with them silently — this, I think, had been his cross, his consecration. And yet, he knew that a time might come when his will would break: when loyalty to his oath, his memories, his mystic ideal of sacrifice — all would fail him; when in utter rebellion his curbed spirit would tear asunder the bonds which he had worn so long about his soul. The coming of Eleanor, the hard restraint which he had put upon himself at Washington, his neighbors' coolness since the rumors of what

happened there had spread among them, the exquisite pain which this new atmosphere of love-making at The Cedars had brought to him, and now the sight of this boy's dumb, useless agony — all these things swelled and ached in his breast. Acutely sensitive as he was to every aspect and appeal of nature, the sudden storm, harshly contradicting the sweet promise of the morning, echoed his spirit's uprising against the stupid contrarieties of life. The great revolt of human souls possessed him. His steps grew swift, irregular. His hands opened and closed spasmodically. Lines of pain formed about his lips. The gray eyes glowed with a mysterious light of anger.

Had the spirit of his dead love been watching over him, surely she would have brought before him some figure of suffering; for in such a mood a prayer, a cry for help, would have availed the most to save him. But now — his guardian angel had fled into the storm. There was the wild clatter of a horse's gallop up the avenue. He turned to the doorway, and Robert Underwood crossed the threshold.

CHAPTER X



UNDERWOOD'S clothing was drenched and disarranged. His eyes were bloodshot, but not from drink. The two men stared at each other in silence; and in the eyes of both there was a deep, unspeakable appeal. The storm was by this time at its fiercest, and in the darkened hall only a sort of twilight, brightened now and then with lightning, shone upon their white faces. Selden stood motionless where he had stopped in his walk. When at last he spoke, his voice was altogether strange.

"You have come again, Robert?" he almost whispered.

Underwood slowly entered the hall.

"Yes, I have come again — to thank you for this new honor you have done me. Surely I was expected. Are not our houses to be united? Is there not a new bond twisted for us? Has not love come back into the lists, and overthrown death, and restored the past?"

He was shaking like a drunken man, but he was not drunk.

"If you come in peace, you shall not miss a welcome, Robert."

"And do you imagine me cur enough ever to come to this house in peace? When we have lived our lives over again, when the grave has given up its dead, I may come in peace. Is it true that you have arranged this outrage on decency? Is it true that Eleanor and your brother are to be married?"

"Yes, it is true."

"Then I swear it shall not be done while I live — by all that has come between you and me, between yours and mine, I swear it. You shall not mix our blood in such a wedlock. If it must be mingled, it shall not be that way.

Once more, I ask you if you have manhood enough to fight."

"You know I cannot if I would."

"Cannot? Why?"

"Because of the ruin passion has already made of lives that were dearer to me than my own, Robert, — because I have sworn to darken no other life as mine was darkened. Across the graves of the helpless victims of our fathers' sin I would not draw the sword again though the devil himself were my opponent. Is it not enough that your father and my gentle mother were sacrificed to the false honor you profess? Is it not enough that the shadow of sin and death has hovered over the lives of these children from their cradles?"

"You will not fight?"

"No, I will not."

"Then the boy shall fight for himself."

"Robert!" Selden moved a step forward, and his pale face came more into the light. "You would drag him from her side? You would kill this happiness of theirs? You would break another heart like — Margaret's?

In the name of God, what have these two done that they also must pay the penalty of that ancient sin?"

Surely, the devil himself was prompting Underwood.

"'Unto the third and fourth generation,'" he said. "Runs it not so?"

"If I know the boy's heart, he will not fight with you."

"Then let him go and live in some country where they tolerate a coward, for I swear he shall be hounded from the Black Belt. Old Leslie Selden shall turn in his grave to see it. Slanderer as he was, at least he stood ready to make good with his sword the lie his lips had spoken."

"Robert!" Selden's hand was gripping a chair, and he was breathing heavily, like a man engaged in some physical wrestling.

The devil in Underwood was prompting him the shrewdest way to his devil's end. The swords on the wall caught his eye.

"Ah," he said, "you would defend his memory? Then take down yonder swords and

defend it like a man. Look! He watches from the canvas to see how valiantly his son maintains the honor of his family." He turned his back on Selden and gazed at the portrait, laughing harshly. "What do you think of your offspring, sir? Or is it indeed your blood that creeps in his muddy veins?" He saw the portrait of Selden's mother. "But perhaps the son took after his mother, and sucked his cowardice from her breast."

"Robert!" Selden's voice was scarcely audible.

Underwood's eyes moved on to the portrait of Margaret.

"Ah, another witness! And what thinks she of her chosen knight? A parlor-knight, it seems, more skilled to rob a woman of her honor than to defend his own."

But Selden did not speak.

By some instinct, Underwood knew that his time had come. His wild eyes still upon the portrait, which seemed to shrink away before his gaze, and feeling surely backward and downward into the inmost heart of the man behind

him, he broke into a fury of speech and laughter. A frenzy seized, inspired him. Raving like a maniac, and with all a maniac's cunning, he laughed and jeered and cursed at that which was most sacred to them both. Words which he did not need to form — words such as neither he nor Selden had ever uttered in their lives before — words that will blacken every fine, sweet thing in human life — ribald jokes, filthy imputations — rushed to his lips and spattered forth upon the gentle, pictured face before him. Old scenes, bitter to him, unspeakably dear to Selden, sprang back to life again, distorted, darkened, and befouled. It was as if he had dug down with ghoulish hands into the very grave of their dead love, and torn the coffin open, and stripped away the shroud, and showed the horrid feast of worms.

Suddenly, the chains burst and fell away from Selden's soul. A brute rage lashed in his blood; the simple, earthly manhood of a thousand lives, lived out before his time, swept over him and tossed aside the Christ-like saintliness of his one life. A single bound,

and he had taken the other's throat in his hands, stifled his speech, crushed him down upon his knees.

"Margaret shamed by my love! Meet me to-night — out there — before her grave — and I will drive yonder sword through your heart and tear your vile tongue from its roots." He lifted Underwood to his feet and hurled him against the wall. "Out of my sight, or by the God who made us both, and twisted the thread of your dark life with mine, I'll kill you where you stand!"

Panting, dazed, exhausted, Underwood leaned against the wall. Slowly he drew himself erect, arranged his clothing with trembling hands, and moved toward the door. There he paused a moment, but he did not turn. Without another glance at Selden, he threw himself upon his horse, and once again the clatter of a headlong gallop sounded through the storm.

For many minutes Selden stood motionless where Robert had left him, his hand gripping the chair, his whole frame rigid, his eyes staring

into vacancy. Now and then, he muttered to himself mechanically: "At her grave! At her grave!" and slowly nodded his head. While he still stood there, the storm subsided. Eleanor and Fitzhugh rode up to the steps and dismounted.

The noise aroused him. Instinctively, he shrank back into the shadow of the stairway, and when they entered they did not see him. They were both drenched with rain, and Eleanor seemed to have been frightened by the storm, for Fitzhugh was tenderly supporting her.

"Why, there's nobody here!" he said. "I wonder if the others got a ducking, too. Beverley! Henry! That couldn't have been old Henry who passed us at the bridge. Whoever it was, he was going at the king's own pace, and laughing like a madman. Plague take these thunderstorms! We'll abolish 'em, dear, when we come back."

But Eleanor was chilled and shuddering.

"If I were superstitious," she said, "I think I should be frightened by these sudden changes

from bright to dark. It is too bad our glorious day should be so marred!"

"Ah, but it's going to take more than a change of weather to rob us of our happiness now," he answered. "Think of all that once divided us. Why, the whole past rose up to part us, dear, and old Henry killed the past that we might be united. Now we walk into the future, side by side, and no power in earth or hell shall ever tear our hearts apart. There shall be no more division or estrangement; you shall not even dream of it. For us, there shall be only love and peace."

He put his arm about her, and they passed slowly up the stairway, until the murmur of their voices died on Selden's ear.

He staggered forth from his hiding like a drunken man suddenly restored to his senses, but not to his strength, by some violent physical shock or the revelation of some imminent peril. He threw his hands to his head. 'Peace? Peace?' And had he not destroyed the peace they dreamed of? Had he not done the thing against which his

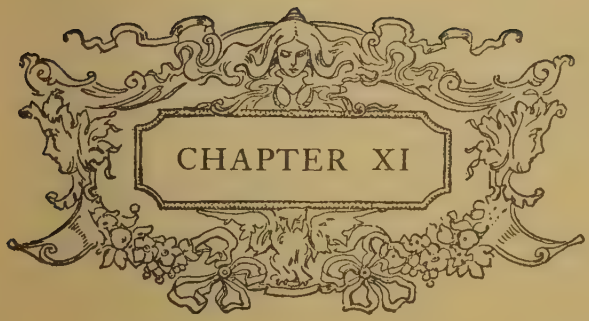
whole life had protested? Would not Robert's blood or his come in between them? Would not death come back into the lists and drive out love again? What madness had possessed him when he yielded? "How could I? How could I?" he almost sobbed,—"with the sight of their happiness in my eyes, the very perfume of their fresh young love in my nostrils! Weak—weak as the merest boy who never faced temptation."

In an agony of remorse, he dropped on his knees before the portraits and prayed to those pictured faces for forgiveness of the sin they had looked down upon.

The storm passed as swiftly as it had come. The rain broke into gusts, and swept away in misty clouds. Gradually, and then rapidly, the light returned; a little while, and the sun was shining as brightly as ever. Only a slight steaming of the earth, and here and there a raindrop, bore witness to the inconsequent day's caprice. A mocking-bird fluttered forth from the heart of a hedge, mounted to the topmost point of a cedar near the door,

ruffled his feathers, smoothed them, called out once or twice with a cheery note, then flung himself upward and sank slowly downward again, filling all the air with careless ecstasy.

CHAPTER XI



IT was near midnight when Burwell, followed by old Lewis, emerged from a wood path into a little moonlit area, halfway between the great house and the negro quarters. The place was utterly silent. Some evenings, its stillness would be invaded by negro voices from the quarters, raised in plantation melodies or quaintly mournful songs of devotion; or, if there had been no revival for some months, by the tinkling of a banjo and the heavy shuffling of feet. But negroes avoid graveyards after nightfall. For miles around, no safer rendezvous could have been found.

The still air, heavy with the languor of the

season, was laden also with the scent of the rich, damp earth, and with the ravishing perfume of a night-blooming jasmine. Long wisps of gray Spanish moss, hanging motionless from the great branches of the white oaks, formed a sort of curtain on all four sides of the little square. A dogwood, one superb mass of white, loomed out of the semi-darkness on the side next the quarters. It was a night for tremulous lovers to grow bold in.

There were not many graves at The Cedars. Much the largest was a stately monument commemorating the civil and military services of Governor Selden, the founder of the estate Beside him lay his wife. Opposite these two Margaret Hilliard waited for Selden. A row of humbler gravestones formed a third side of the little quadrangle: on these, only Christian names were written, for they marked the resting-places of slaves. On the side next the great house there was a stone bench where Selden often sat in the cool of the afternoon. The little square was covered with white sand from the neighboring river. In the moon-

light, the inscriptions on the gravestones were distinctly legible.

Burwell paused before the monument to Governor Selden, newly erected by the state, and read the inscription. When he turned, he found the old negro at his elbow, gazing awesomely at the mysterious writing on the marble. In Lewis's face there was once more the same look of helpless apprehension it had worn when he awaited Eleanor's coming on Christmas eve.

"What do it say, Marse John?" he asked.

Burwell read the inscription aloud: —

"LESLIE SELDEN

Born in Virginia
A.D. 1785

Died at Monterey Mexico
A.D. 1846

Governor Senator General"

Both stood for a moment looking at the monument, and then, with a common thought, they turned to the graves of Selden's mother and of Margaret Hilliard. It was as if the

masterful spirit of old Governor Selden still ruled in this quiet place of death. For were not these graves of his making? Was it not because of him —?

Obedient to Burwell's gesture, Lewis started to place on the stone bench the bundle of small swords which he carried.

"Marse Hinry!" he exclaimed; and both became aware for the first time of Selden's presence.

Doubtless, he had been sitting there for hours. Burwell had not seen him since early in the evening. He did not rise, but motioned Burwell to come and sit beside him. Lewis, laying down the swords, went and took his stand where the path from the highway led into the clearing. It was that way Underwood might be expected to come.

"You understand what I wish you to do, John?"

Selden's head was bowed upon his hands. His face was turned away. Burwell could not see his eyes.

"I think I understand, Henry. I shall do

everything possible for a peaceable settlement, short of an absolute surrender to Robert's pride. You cannot consent to break off the engagement. I do not believe that would be possible, in any event; Fitzhugh and Miss Underwood are both of age. Besides, I agree with you that that would be worse for the children than if you met him."

"Yes," said Selden, slowly, "I think that would be worse for them than if I met him. You must try to believe — I think you will believe, John, after what has already happened, — that there is no humiliation I would not endure rather than fight with Robert. I could spend the rest of my life abroad. But the children are coming back to live at The Cedars, and you know how their lives here would be darkened if first I, and then Fitzhugh, should decline Robert's challenge. No doubt, this marriage will seem a strange thing, almost an unnatural thing to our neighbors, who sympathize with Robert's feeling in the matter. My refusal to fight at Washington has turned many of them against us already. If, after accepting

his second challenge, I should again shrink from a meeting, and then Fitzhugh also should refuse to fight, our oldest acquaintances might refuse to recognize us. Robert would certainly challenge Fitzhugh — he told me he would, this morning. I do not believe the boy would prove as weak as I was, but life at The Cedars would be made unbearable both for him and for Eleanor."

"And if it is impossible to persuade Robert to give up his purpose?"

"I have sent him word that we will fight with small swords."

He kept his eyes upon the ground. Burwell tried in vain to read his face.

"Henry," he said at last, "when you were a boy your father made you practice with foils as well as pistols every morning before breakfast. I have seen you fence with Robert Underwood at the University."

Selden did not speak.

"You fence far better than he does, Henry."

There was no reply.

"You do not mean to kill him, Henry. I know you don't."

But Selden was still silent.

"For God's sake, Henry, remember how dear your life is to others, if not to yourself — to Fitzhugh — to little Beverley. I ought not to speak of myself, perhaps, but my love is older than theirs. This very day has brought me happiness such as I had no right to dream of, but the night would make me curse the day if — if I were to stand here helpless and see you killed." Burwell's honest voice fairly broke. "I remember that one day, when we were little fellows, you tumbled over and made believe you were dead. That was nearly forty years ago, Henry, but I believe the moment while I was deceived was the wretchedest of my whole life."

Selden looked at his friend, but quickly turned his eyes away again.

"I have not forgotten your love, John, or the children's; but when a man has sinned as I have, there is no easy way of atonement." He paused, and went on more calmly. "I never thought I should come to ask such a service as

this of you, John, or that I should ever shrink from laying my heart bare to your gaze. I do not care deeply for other men's approval, but to you, who shared the wild dreams of my boyhood, the fever of my youth, to you who alone have cared to follow the dull course of my manhood — to you, John, this must seem a miserable ending of it all. For I fear it will be the end, even if I escape Robert's sword. In that case, if Robert will not give up his hatred for me and mine, I think it will be best for me to go abroad, and remain until he dies, or until my own death shall set me free to take my place — yonder." He pointed to the place which had been left for him. "It will seem a poor, spiritless life, John, consecrated as it was to a single vow — and that unkept. Even your love can hardly glorify the huddled figure, bent always over a grave, which you will see whenever you think of me; for I myself have rudely broken the peace of the one grave I guarded." Again he paused, and looked down upon the ground, his head turned sidewise, after his habit. But after a little he raised

his head again and looked upward with a half-smile on his lips. "And yet," he said, "if I had not fallen to-day, if I had lived out the tame life I planned, the end would have been to me a more precious triumph than any I dreamed of when you and I were boys."

But Burwell would not be put aside.

"Henry, you cannot defend yourself all night without thrusting back; and if he killed you, that would darken the lives of these children, here or anywhere, worse than if you did again refuse to fight with him, even now. Sell The Cedars. Let them find another home. Let Underwood say and do whatever his black heart may prompt."

"Do not say that, John. You have not seen his heart; and I — I think I have. Do you remember him as a child, a little fellow with big, black eyes, wistful and proud? This morning, when I was crazed with anger, and held his throat in my hands, I looked into his face; and it was the face of that same child, — bitter, enraged, revengeful — but also, unspeakably wretched and forlorn. It seemed to me I saw

his whole life, John. It has been a far, far harder life to live than mine has been. If it had been mine, I do not know what I should have made of it. For never, never once, — until this night, — has Robert had his heart's desire. Please don't question me further, John. Only believe that I can find no better way than that which I shall take."

Helpless, in silence, Burwell waited until Lewis made a sudden movement.

"Dey comin', Marse John," he said; and with one glance at his master he passed with bowed head across the opening.

Underwood, followed by another gentleman of the neighborhood, strode out of the shadows from the side nearest the highway. At the edge of the enclosure he paused, looked across to where Selden sat, glanced keenly at Burwell, and motioned his friend to advance. Burwell came forward to meet him, and the two raised their hats. Selden did not rise.

Underwood's companion was a recognized authority on all questions relating to the duello. No doubt, his fondness for "affairs," rather

than any close friendship with Underwood, was the explanation of his presence. He looked at his watch.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I trust we have not kept you waiting. I did not receive my friend's summons until late this afternoon."

"No, Mr. Childers," said the governor, "I think we came too early."

"Well, we are all here now, I believe," Childers went on briskly. "Shall we proceed with the arrangements?"

"Before we begin, Mr. Childers," said Burwell, quietly, "there is a provision of the code which you and I ought to carry out. This affair has been so hurried that we, the seconds, have had no opportunity for conference. As you know, however, the code requires us to find a peaceful way out of the difficulty if we can; and I think we ought to discuss the matter with an eye to that provision."

Childers did not hesitate. It was evident that he was prepared for such an advance.

"Yes, sir," he said, "I am familiar with that

provision of the code, and have already consulted my principal in reference to an accommodation of his differences with Mr. Selden. My principal, however, considers himself so deeply wronged that I can find no basis of an accommodation which is likely to prove satisfactory both to him and to Mr. Selden. In case Mr. Selden should decline, on any grounds, to proceed with this interview, I am instructed to wait on Mr. Fitzhugh Selden at once."

"And on what terms," said Burwell, "will your principal forego a meeting?"

"My principal, sir, considers that he has received provocation greater than any that words alone could convey. He holds the proposed marriage between a member of his family and Mr. Fitzhugh Selden to be not merely an insult to himself but an outrage on the memory of his father. He will forego a meeting only on condition that the engagement be broken off at once, that Mr. Selden tender him an apology for having presumed to arrange it without his consent, and that Mr. Fitzhugh Selden pledge himself to make no attempt to renew it."

Burwell kept his temper.

"But surely, Mr. Childers, you, as his second, do not countenance such a demand as this?"

"I feel myself bound by the instructions of my principal, sir."

"And he will be satisfied with nothing short of this absolute surrender to his pride? Have you considered, Mr. Childers, that Mr. Selden probably could not, if he would, prevent this marriage?"

"Mr. Underwood will accept nothing else, sir. He holds that the proposed marriage would forever dishonor both Miss Underwood and himself."

Burwell paused, frowning, and glanced across to where Underwood stood motionless, his back to the group. He felt himself helpless.

"I will acquaint my principal with your proposal," he said, and lifting his hat he returned to Selden. The other waited in silence until, after a few words with Selden, he came forward again and announced that his principal, though willing to sacrifice his own feelings in any way

to avoid a meeting, could not sacrifice the happiness of others. Being the challenged party, he had named small swords. Mr. Underwood's representative was at liberty to choose a weapon.

Childers examined the swords carefully.

"They are of equal length," he said, "and apparently of the same temper."

He took one, and retired to assist Underwood in making ready. Burwell touched Selden on the shoulder, and he rose mechanically, threw off his coat, took the weapon which Burwell offered him, and slowly advanced to meet his antagonist. Underwood's eyes searched his face. But Selden, on his part, never once looked at the other until the word was given.

There was a moment's whispered consultation between the seconds, and then Childers spoke:

"Gentlemen, I presume you are both familiar with the rules governing an encounter with small swords?"

Both bowed.

"On guard! Assault!"

CHAPTER XII

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THE mystery of all human souls' despair hung over the strange, moonlit scene. None of the three who looked upon it, not even Childers, could have failed to see in it the very hand of fate. Old Lewis, hovering on the edge of the wood with open mouth and straining eyes, was not the least alive to the pity of it. The pure moonlight, the sweet air of spring — all nature, in that Southern clime and that charmed season, — wooed the restless spirit to gentleness and peace. Yet here was the world-old story of love breeding hate; the old perversity of human lives; the old, inexplicable riddle of pain. Here were high hopes abandoned, noble purposes unful-

filled. Here were two men, of gentle birth, blessed beyond most men with riches, talents, promise of good lives, surrendered to the impulses of savages and brutes. Underwood darted at his adversary as a famished tiger leaps for his prey. The sword-blades clashed and crossed and hissed like serpents. Now this way and now that the two men turned and circled, advanced and retreated.

Childers quickly perceived that Selden was the more skilful swordsman; he saw, too, that Underwood's eagerness put him at a disadvantage. But to his surprise Selden, though occasionally he feinted, never once took advantage of an opening. Burwell, thinking that he had rightly divined his friend's purpose, stamped the earth in helpless rage. He could do nothing but await the end, hoping that Underwood would exhaust himself and be at Selden's mercy. But the end came more quickly than he thought, — so quickly, indeed, that he did not at once perceive how it had come. Suddenly, from fighting altogether on the defensive, Selden changed to an attack. There was a swift inter-

change, a turn, a rush, a stumble, — and Selden was on his knees at Underwood's feet, his weapon lowered, his eyes uplifted to the other's face.

Childers' warning was not needed. Burwell did indeed start wildly forward, but before he could have interfered the moment had passed.

Only Selden had seen Underwood's face.

"Robert," he said firmly, "strike, — strike now. We must end this quarrel now."

Underwood's head was lowered. His face was deeply flushed. He was breathing heavily. He did not move or speak. Selden threw his sword aside, and rose to his feet. Lewis, who had also bounded forward with a cry of anguish when he saw Selden fall, picked up the weapon.

"Robert, are you satisfied? My life was yours, and you give it back to me. The code you follow forbids you to go farther."

But Underwood only turned to Childers and in a low voice asked for his coat. Childers brought it him, and he put it on. The flush on his face was deeper still. His eyes were on the ground. Selden looked at Burwell, and he

and Childers drew back and left them standing together, alone.

Selden spoke again.

"Robert, we both have sinned; but fate is kinder than we deserved. I cannot ask Eleanor and Fitzhugh to give up their hope in life, their happiness, their love — to live as you and I have lived. You can, if you will, go on and darken both their lives. But can you not — will you not — give up your hatred? Will you not take my hand?"

But Underwood did not raise his eyes. Selden's face was as it was that morning, when he talked with Virginius in the hall.

"Robert, you and I have that in common which none can share with us. To-night, at last, I understand, for I have seen the whole of both our lives, and from the bottom of my heart I honor you for yours. That I should fill mine with a sweet and happy memory was nothing. But you — you, too, have been steadfast, scorning in agony to seek forgetfulness, faithful to the vision of that which life denied you, loyal to the highest in your own heart.

At last, I know, I know. And I am shamed before you, Robert, — shamed because I never once made my way to you — across your anger, across your pride, across your silent pain, — and begged the right to stand beside you in a harder constancy than mine. Am I too late, Robert? I swear to you that I desire your love, your friendship, as I desire nothing else in that remainder of my life which you permit me to go on to live. To-day, not in generosity, but in anger and in weakness, I gave you your heart's desire. Will you not, — out of your strength, out of a nobler weakness — will you not give me mine?"

If Underwood had only looked into his eyes!

"Robert, you and I are bound together in this life; the very threads of our lives are twisted. To you and me alike, over the waves of life, there came one vision. We both stretched out our longing arms towards it, and it swayed towards me, stayed a moment at my side, and then — death, like a refluent wave, caught it and bore it back, away from me, away from you. You and I, alone in all this world,

keep in our hearts the same white memory. Robert, take my hand. Kneel down with me — here — before her grave, as though we were still children, and let us beg forgiveness for our common sin — mine worse, far worse than yours, Robert — our sin against her, against that memory we both have guarded. Will you not take my hand?"

If Underwood had only raised his eyes and looked into the eyes of the man who was fighting for his soul! He shook like an aspen. An inarticulate sound like a sob tore through him. But he drew backward, away from the hand outstretched to him — slowly, step by step, until a little space divided them.

"Satisfied?" At last he raised his head. Some dread, some premonition, made the others draw nearer when for the first time they heard his voice. "Satisfied? While you — you triumph over me again. And do you think that I — I also — do not understand? It was you — you who gave *me* my life. All our lives, you have been the victor, I the vanquished. You stole from me the first place in my father's

heart and then, — and then you tried to give it back to me. Eleanor forsakes me and cleaves to you. You disgraced me at Washington. You drove me from *her* side while she lived, and you — you will lie there — in death — beside her. And now, you give me back my life — the life you blasted from the very beginning. The meanest of your slaves would scorn me if I took it from your hands. If you opened the gates of heaven for me, I would not enter. I will not take your gift. I will not take your hand."

He had moved still farther away while he was speaking. Slowly, his hand sought his breast.

Selden was the first to divine his purpose, and sprang forward to save him from self-slaughter. But the movement only changed his purpose to a worse.

"Stop!" he cried hoarsely, his eyes blazing like a madman's, a terrible smile on his lips. "Stop! Ah, you said that the threads of our lives are twisted. By God, they shall snap together!"

They all sprang upon him, and Lewis, thrusting his body between him and Selden, drove the sword into his breast. But he had fired before the slave could reach him. The pistol dropped from his hand; he fell to his knees.

"Fool," he said to Lewis, "there was no need to interfere. I meant to die." He sank slowly forward, first upon his hands, then down upon his face, and the white sand was crimsoned with a rush of blood from his mouth.

The horror of the deed had fascinated them. They all stood still and silent until Selden staggered backward and steadied himself against a gravestone. Burwell and Lewis ran to support him. He looked pityingly at Lewis.

"He only meant to protect me, John," he said. "Mr. Childers will testify in his favor."

"Not a hair of his head shall be touched," Burwell cried. "But yourself, Henry, yourself? Are you hit?"

"Is he hit you, Marse Hinry?" Lewis's

tones were piteous. "Fer Gord's sake, Marse Hinry, is he hit you?"

"I think it is the end, John," said Selden, quietly.

"But here — here! Oh, Henry, you must not die here!"

"Yes, here," he said. "Let it be here. Against these who lie here I have sinned."

A group of frightened house-servants broke into the clearing. A moment later, Fitzhugh ran out of the wood, and after him Miss Joanna and Eleanor and Beverley. They all paused, astonished at the silence and at the motionless figures in the little square. They did not see where Robert lay; but when little Beverley saw that Selden did not rise, and how pale he was, and Burwell tearing the clothing from his breast, she cried out "Brubber!" and threw herself at his feet, her arms clasping his knees.

He laid his hand on her head, and pushed back her hair, and kissed her. But his eyes passed quickly beyond her.

"Eleanor! Fitzhugh!" he said. "Swear to

me that nothing which has happened to-night shall ever drive you apart."

"I swear it, Henry," said Fitzhugh, and he turned to Eleanor.

Eleanor grew deathly pale.

"Oh, it was Robert," she cried. "I know it was Robert!"

But Burwell whispered to her.

"Swear, girl, swear. He is dying!"

She put her hand over her eyes. Selden looked at her imploringly. At last, she said:

"I will not leave him or forsake him, until death us do part."

In a moment, he had fainted. They stood about him, sobbing and trembling. The negroes from the quarters, gathered on the edge of the clearing, were breaking into long, doleful cries. Burwell leaned over and put his ear to Selden's heart.

"He is not gone," he cried. "Ride for Dr. Clayton, some of you. Hurry, hurry!" and several of the servants dashed down the path that led to the highway.

When Selden opened his eyes again, his mind was wandering. Eleanor was standing directly in front of him, the moonlight falling full upon her pale face and her uncovered head. He stared at her a little while in a puzzled way, and then, a curiously boyish smile came into his face — such a smile as none had seen there for many years.

"Is it you, dear?" he said. "Margaret! Meg!"

Burwell was the first to understand.

"Ah, the old love again," he whispered; and he beckoned the trembling girl to advance.

Selden took her hand in his.

"Have I been asleep — out here?" he said. "I — I must have been asleep, for I have had the strangest dream! I dreamt that I was almost an old man, and that you — that you were dead, my darling, long, long ago. And I thought that little Eleanor had grown up to be a woman, tall and beautiful, and just like you. And I thought — yes — I almost thought — that I — loved her." He was still

smiling faintly, and striving to raise her hand to his lips. "Wasn't it a strange dream, dear? But it was — it was —"

He loosed her hand. His head drooped down upon his breast.

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